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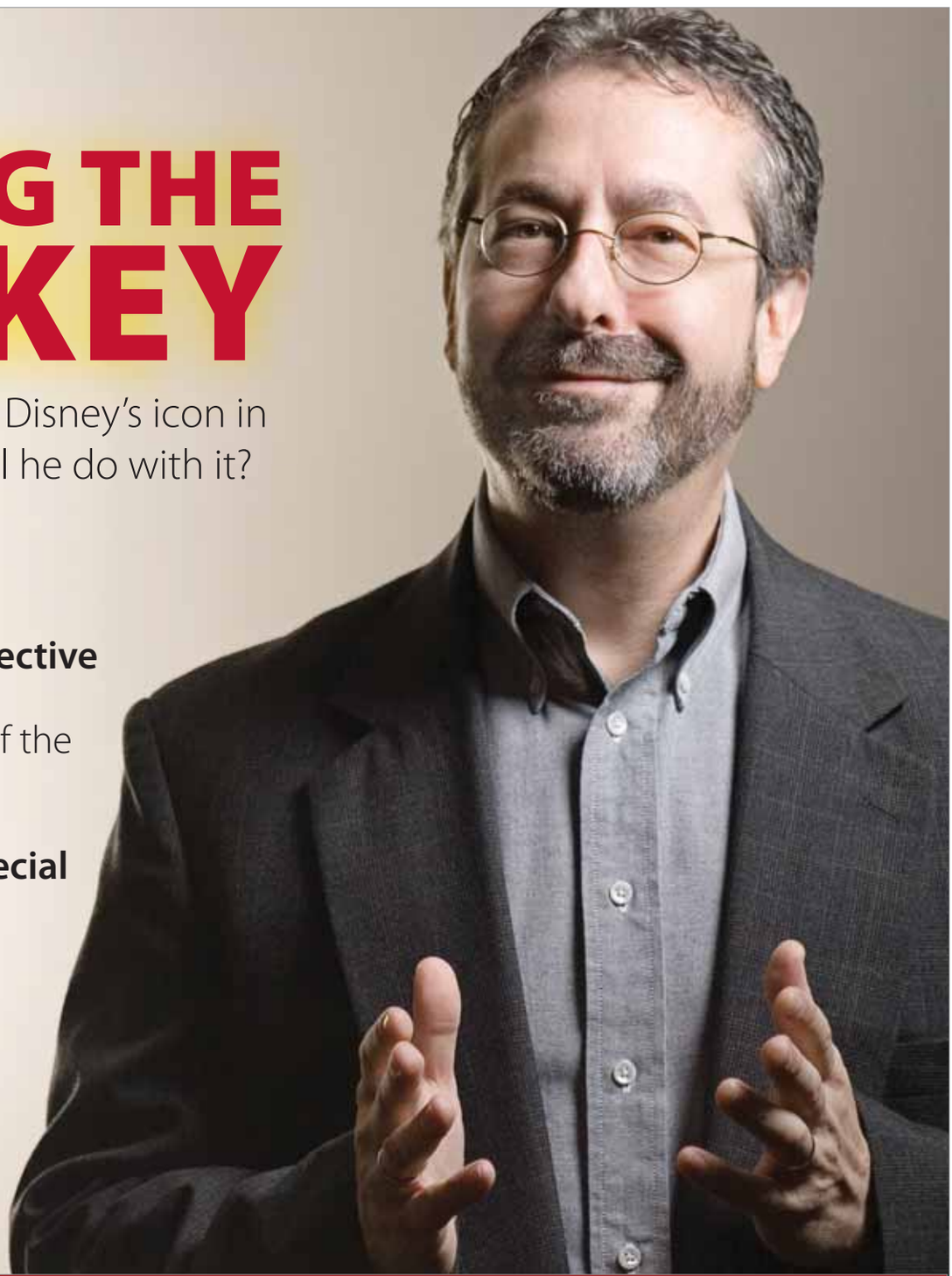

TAKING THE MICKEY

Warren Spector has Disney's icon in his grasp – what will he do with it?

ALSO INSIDE

100th Issue Retrospective

Phil Harrison: Profile of the development legend

20-page Canada Special

The 50 games every developer must play

PLUS ▸ DEVELOP LIVERPOOL • INFINITY WARD • FACIAL ANIMATION GUIDE • TOOLS NEWS & MORE

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develop THE INTERNATIONAL MONTHLY FOR GAMES PROGRAMMERS, ARTISTS, MUSICIANS AND PRODUCERS

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intentmedia
Intent Media is a member of the Periodical Publishers Associations

Develop Magazine. Saxon House, 6a St. Andrew Street. Hertford, Hertfordshire. SG14 1JA
ISSN: 1365-7240 Copyright 2009 Printed by The Manson Group, AL3 6PZ

Tel: 01992 535646 **Fax:** 01992 535648
www.develop-online.net

CIRCULATION IS OVER 8,000

Subscription

UK: £35 Europe: £50 Rest of World: £70

Enquiries, please email: dev.subscriptions@c-cms.com
Telephone: 01580 883 848

Charges cover 11 issues and 1st class postage or airmail dispatch for overseas subscribers.

Develop is published 11 times a year, reaching 8,000 readers throughout the UK and international market.

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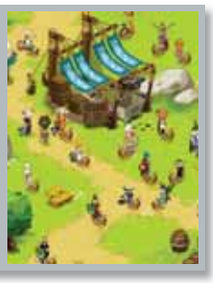

'Let developers drive the marketing,' says Infinity Ward

Activision-owned studio thinks more developers should take responsibility for their own successes and failures

by Christopher Dring

Studios should take charge of promoting their own products, according to *Call of Duty* creators Infinity Ward.

The studio has been active in the PR of its upcoming *Modern Warfare 2* by revealing game details through Twitter and YouTube. And the firm's community manager Robert Bowling has told *Develop* that he thinks it's wrong for publishers to take complete control of a game's promotional activity.

"I don't think any developer should not have control of how its game is presented, marketed or communicated," he said.

"And studios should take control of that a lot, lot more. It is why I started the Twitter account in the first place. I have direct line to our audience and the press. Many editors will follow me, and they can direct message me and I can clarify things. There is no middleman. We are responsible for what we say and what we do, and we can be held accountable for our successes and failures."

Infinity Ward has also worked alongside Activision's marketing department, by having to approve any initiative the publisher is looking to run. And Bowling feels developers are better placed to know how to sell to their consumer.

"We know everything there is to know about *Modern Warfare 2*," continued Bowling. "Not only do we know the game but we know the gamer. We know what to expect from them and what they expect from us. So it helps us guide decisions overall, including design, PR and marketing.

"A benefit of being so close to the game, is that you can call bullshit on the really lame things. Sometimes a marketing idea will come through that we just don't like. For example, it was recently suggested that we should send a newsletter to our website users to pre-order the strategy guide for *Modern Warfare 2*. And I said no. Yeah, it would probably sell a few more strategy guides, but we don't use our newsletter to market to our gamers."

Infinity Ward's relationship with its community has been driven through its extensive use of social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Bowling believes the relationships developers are now having with their audiences are making gamers more aware of the studios behind the releases.

"The average gamer is so much closer to the people who make the games than they ever were before," he added.

> ***"The average gamer is much closer to the people who make games than they ever were before."***
>
> Robert Bowling, Infinity Ward

"As a result of that they are so much more developer aware. No longer is it an Activision game; it's now an Infinity Ward game, or a Treyarch game or a Bungie game. And gamers know where to go to offer feedback.

"I would eventually like to get to the point where there is no wall," he concluded.

"So something happens and the community knows about it and they offer feedback on it. So we're all part of the same team. The more we get away from the PR and towards what's real about game development, the better."

www.infinityward.com

Editorial

New dialogue channels

A lot has changed in games development during *Develop*'s nine years as a monthly magazine.

Too much to list here in great detail – instead, our massive retrospective starting on page 25 should remind you of some of the themes and issues that have arisen in the sector over the years.

One clear change has been the way developers talk about themselves.

At first, there was scepticism all over as the industry transitioned into the new century. Some scoffed at the idea of moving towards more formalised practices for games development, but others fought against the 'bedroom programmer' label to be more professional.

Today, things are different – games developers are savvier about the market. Thanks to daily sales data, online charts and digital distribution, most think almost entirely in terms of answering the question 'how can I be more commercial?'

Somewhere in between, there were moments when developers became hard to talk to, or reluctant to talk. Either thanks to pressure from publishers, or fear of putting their business at risk, some just clammed up.

For those inside publishers, it was even worse – still is to this day. A long chain of corporate drudgery and approval 'protects' a large chunk of the workforce from saying anything, let alone anything dangerous.

So perhaps, as a magazine, that's the biggest change *Develop* has seen: the way developers interact with the media is more sophisticated than it ever was.

Of course, it has to be – not only is the feedback between consumers and developers tighter than ever thanks to things like Twitter and online metrics, but it's the right thing to be doing.

That's why hearing American studios like Infinity Ward (*page 5*) urge developers to take control of marketing, or Warren Spector (*page 17*) saying developers not committed to his studio can just 'go do something else' is always refreshing.

Undoubtedly, you'll hear more of this over the next nine years, as more and more developers around the world, empowered by changes in the market, choose to stand up and be counted.

Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

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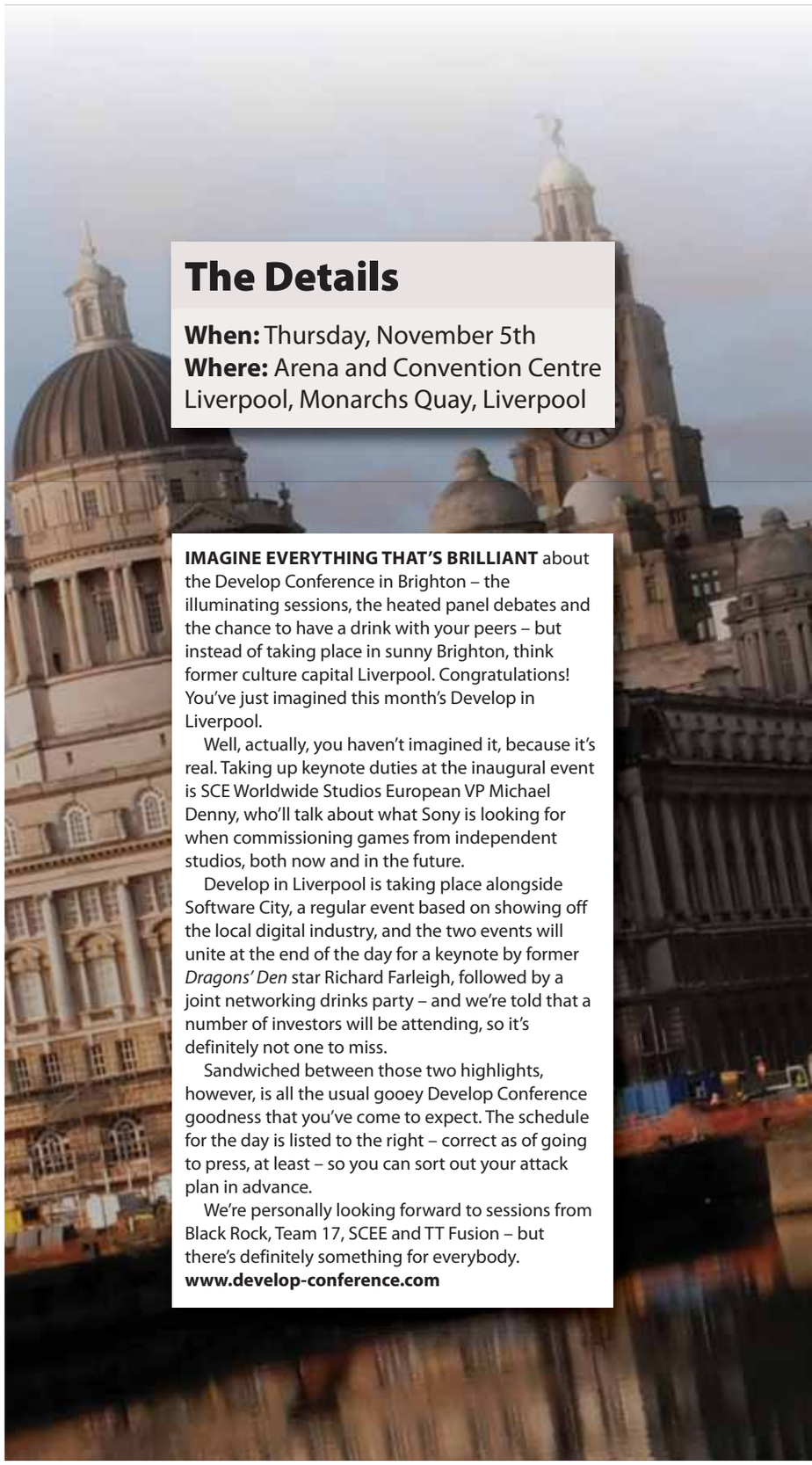


The Details

When: Thursday, November 5th
Where: Arena and Convention Centre Liverpool, Monarchs Quay, Liverpool

IMAGINE EVERYTHING THAT'S BRILLIANT about the Develop Conference in Brighton – the illuminating sessions, the heated panel debates and the chance to have a drink with your peers – but instead of taking place in sunny Brighton, think former culture capital Liverpool. Congratulations! You've just imagined this month's Develop in Liverpool.

Well, actually, you haven't imagined it, because it's real. Taking up keynote duties at the inaugural event is SCE Worldwide Studios European VP Michael Denny, who'll talk about what Sony is looking for when commissioning games from independent studios, both now and in the future.

Develop in Liverpool is taking place alongside Software City, a regular event based on showing off the local digital industry, and the two events will unite at the end of the day for a keynote by former *Dragons' Den* star Richard Farleigh, followed by a joint networking drinks party – and we're told that a number of investors will be attending, so it's definitely not one to miss.

Sandwiched between those two highlights, however, is all the usual gooey Develop Conference goodness that you've come to expect. The schedule for the day is listed to the right – correct as of going to press, at least – so you can sort out your attack plan in advance.

We're personally looking forward to sessions from Black Rock, Team 17, SCEE and TT Fusion – but there's definitely something for everybody.
www.develop-conference.com

ce calling

This month's Develop in Liverpool beckons developers to the North for a one-day three-track conference. Here's our guide to what's happening at the event…

	EVOLVE	CODING & PRODUCTION	ART & DESIGN
09:00 - 9:45	Registration	Registration	Registration
9:45 - 10:30	OPENING KEYNOTE: Michael Denny, SCE Worldwide Studios		
10:30 - 11:00	Break	Break	Break
11:00 - 11:45	Turning Browsers into Gamers for Fun and Profit **Dylan Collins**, *Jolt Online Gaming*	PlayStation: Cutting Edge Techniques **Neil Brown**, *SCEE*	Blocking to Rocking! The Art of *LEGO Rock Band* **Matt Palmer**, *TT Fusion*
11:45 - 12:30	Five App Stores Under the Microscope **Stuart Dredge**, *Mobile Entertainment*	Role of the Production House in Game Development and Marketing **Tony Prosser**, *RealtimeUK*	Why is Game Difficulty So Difficult? **Jason Avent**, *Disney Black Rock Studios*
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
13:30 - 14:15	What the Music Industry Can Teach Us About Digital Distribution **Simon Watt**, *Universal Music*	Panel: Get More From Your Music and Audio Team Chair: **John Broomhall**, *Audio Consultant*; **Dan Bardino**, *SCEE*; **Adele Cutting**, *EA*; **Nick Wiswell**, *Bizarre Creations*	Resurrecting the Alien Breed Franchise **John Dennis**, *Team 17*
14:15 - 15:00	Panel: Keeping Northern Games Development on the Map Chair: **Toby Barnes**, *Pixel Lab*; **Richard Wilson**, *TIGA*; **Enda Carey**, *North West Vision & Media*; **Carrie Cunnlife**, *Game Horizon*	A Bizarre Way to do Real-Time Lighting **Stephen MsAuley** and **Steven Tovey**, *Bizarre Creations*	Session TBC
15:00 - 15:30	Break	Break	Break
15:30 - 16:15	Panel: Digital Distribution: From Blue Sky to the Bottom Line Chair: **Nicholas Lovell**, *GamesBrief*; **Mark Morris**, *Introversion*; **Tero Virtala**, *RedLynx*	6 Ways to Get More Bang for Your Buck, **Kevin Hassall**, *Beriah*	Open Mic – Voice Control in SingStar: the Method and the Madness **Charlie Hasdell**, *SCEE*
16:15 - 17:00	*Session TBC*	*Session TBC*	*Session TBC*
17:00 - 17:30	Break	Break	Break
17:30 - 18:00	CLOSING KEYNOTE - RICHARD FARLEIGH, INVESTMENT GURU AND FORMER DRAGON'S DEN PANELLIST		

‘Japanese GDC’ grows Western scope

Yearly Tokyo show CEDEC attracts speakers from around the world ● Tech companies flock to show off innovations

by Ed Fear

Big changes were underfoot at this year’s CEDEC conference – and the best conference that no-one knows about is en route to becoming a key international event.

While 2008’s conference was certainly interesting, there were barriers to being able to recommend attendance.

The location was a chief one: while inner Tokyo is exactly the sort of place you’d want to expense a week’s voyage to, the prospect of attending sessions in classrooms (as was the case when the event took place in the Showa Women’s University) was a touch too literal.

This year, the festivities moved to the Pacifico Yokohama conference centre, and the sea-side setting and proper facilities made the event feel hundreds of times more professional.

The number of Western speakers was also significantly up from last year – and indeed the quality of speakers had risen, too. An introductory panel, chaired by Eidos’ CTO Julien Merceron and featuring Sean Kelly (SCEE), Siobhan Reddy (Media Molecule), Jay Wilbur (Epic) and Jason Spangler (Bioware) discussed the effects of Japanese games worldwide and the influences that have shaped their work. Reddy also presented the story of the studio’s foundation and its unique attitude to dealing with publishers, and the ruthlessness of its creativity policy sparked a lot of questions from the audience.

Thanks to Anoop Gantayat for the images

Also expanded for 2009 was the show’s Expo floor, this year featuring almost double the exhibitors of previous years. The Western game technology sector was similarly better represented, with the Japanese offices of Western stalwarts such as Emergent and Scaleform manning their own booths, while Crytek, Xsens, Havok and NaturalMotion all demonstrated their wares in sponsored sessions.

New for this year was the focus on getting into the industry, with a separate three-track event focused on inspiring Japanese game industry employees to introduce their work and give advice to those looking to enter the market. This was backed up with a Job Cafe, where students could take their CVs and make appointments for face-to-face interviews with representatives from companies such as Capcom, Square Enix, Sega, Namco Bandai and Koei Tecmo.

The raft of improvements from last year proved how agile CEDEC is able to be, and further steps towards making the event worthwhile for foreign delegates are positive.

If only the event could be closer to the Tokyo Game Show – three weeks is a bit too long to convince the boss to let you stay in Japan to bridge the two – CEDEC stands a chance of becoming one of the important game development events of the year.

cedec.cesa.or.jp/en_index.htm

DEVELOP DIARY

YOUR COMPLETE GAMES DEVELOPMENT EVENT CALENDAR FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD…

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL GAME SUMMIT 09

MONTREAL GAME SUMMIT
November 16th to 17th
Montreal, Canada
www.sijm.ca

Canada’s best games development show returns for its fifth year.

The summit is a specialised event offering an environment conducive to learning, networking and discussion. Key representatives from Maxis, Valve, Square Enix and Media Molecule have been secured as keynote speakers.

Other programme highlights include: 80 courses, seminars, conferences and workshops over a two-day period; numerous additional activities including a VIP gala, cocktail parties, specialised meetings and more; some 30 firms presenting at the business lounge.

This year consumer event SPIN also takes place alongside MIGS.

NOVEMBER 2009

DEVELOP IN LIVERPOOL
November 5th
Liverpool, UK
www.developconference.com

NEON DIGITAL ARTS FESTIVAL
November 12th to 15th
Dundee, Scotland
www.northeastofnorth.com

IGC WEST 2009
November 5th to 6th
Los Angeles, USA
www.igcwest.com

BAF GAME 09 – THE ART OF GAMING
November 10th to 11th
Bradford, UK
www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/baf

MONTREAL GAME SUMMIT
November 16th to 17th
Montreal, Canada
www.sijm.ca

GAMER CAMP
November 16th to December 11th
Birmingham, UK
www.ntibirmingham.co.uk

DECEMBER 2009

GAME CONNECTION EUROPE
December 8th to 10th
Lyon, France
www.game-connection.com

THE DEVELOP QUIZ
December 21st
London, UK
www.develop-online.net

FEBRUARY 2010

DICE SUMMIT 2010
February 17th to 19th
Las Vegas, US
www.dicesummit.org

MARCH 2010

GDC 2010
March 9th to 13th
San Francisco, US
www.gdconf.com

MAY 2010

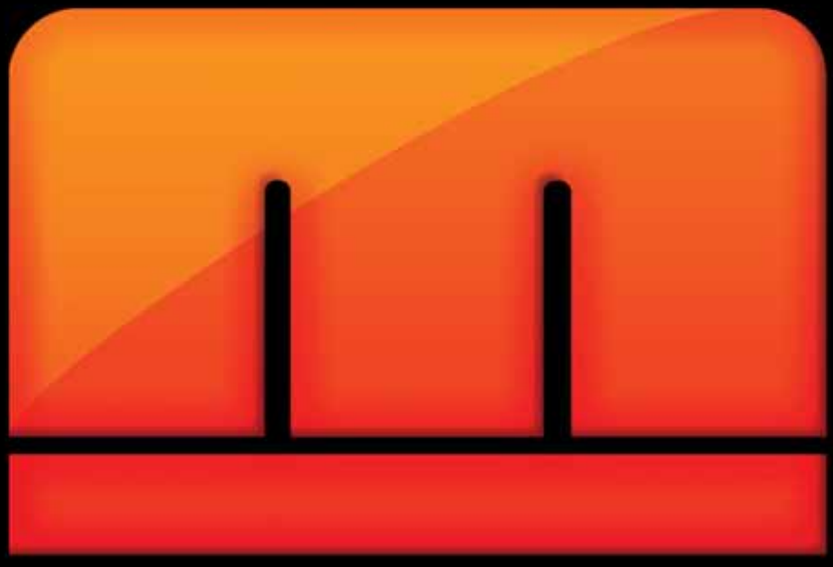
GDC CANADA 2010
May 6th to 7th
Vancouver, Canada
www.gdc-canada.com

JUNE 2010

E3 2010
June 15th to 17th
Los Angeles, US
www.e3expo.com

JULY 2010

DEVELOP IN BRIGHTON
July 13th to 15th
Brighton, UK
www.develop-conference.com



Currently recruiting for: Artists / Designers / Coders

vacancies at www.monumentalgames.com

WorldView

Our monthly digest of the past month's global games news…

DEALS

Spanish studio **Zed Games** has licensed **Trinigy's** Vision Engine for the development of its online PC game *Planet 51*.

Italian software firm **Milestone** has been signed by **Black Bean Games** to develop the first of three brand new racing games based on the World Rally Championships.

Blitz Game Studios has signed up to help publish the PC version of UK micro-studio **Binary Tweed's** XBLA Indie Games title *Clover*.

Disney Interactive has signed up **Charles Cecil's Revolution Software** for design work on the game based on Robert Zemeckis' new movie of *The Christmas Carol*.

NaturalMotion has licensed its animation tech to South Korean MMO specialist **WeMade**.

NaturalMotion has also sealed a 'far-reaching' deal with **Codemasters** who will use the firm's animation engines in future titles.

Animation group **Mixamo** has struck a deal that will offer its lanned motions to **Autodesk** 3ds Max users.

Chinese developer **Radiance** has adopted **Emergent's** Lightspeed engine.

UNITY IS FREE

Engine firm Unity has abolished the low-end licensing fee for its engine – effectively making the technology free for all.

Although the Pro licence will still exist at $1,500 (and presumably be the fee of choice for big companies using the tech, such as EA), Unity expects this 'fremium' engine to attract an even wider base of new developers and independents.

"Now anyone can create interactive content with a best of breed tool without any financial barrier," the firm said, writing for *Develop* in a new regular feature about its technology (*see page 68*).

The new pricing comes into effect with version 2.6 of the engine and was announced at the firm's yearly conference, Unite, which took place last month in San Francisco.

We'll be offering a full report from Unite next month.

www.unity3d.com

UNITED KINGDOM/UNITED STATES

$250M PURCHASE FOR PLAYFISH?

This one is unconfirmed as we go to press, but publish and be damned: rumours are swirling that EA has made a bid to buy social networking firm Playfish.

The deal has been valued at $250m – but that's a steal when you take into account the fact that the company's three most popular Facebook games, *Pet Society*, *Restaurant City* and *Country Story*, attracted more than 32 million players this past August alone.

Playfish currently has offices in London, Beijing, Norway and a recently opened studio in San Francisco.

www.playfish.com

IRELAND

POPCAP PLOTS EXPANSION (PART ONE)

It looks like PopCap is planning to develop new IP for mobile games platforms at its studio in Ireland.

According to a job posting on the *Develop* site, the firm is looking for a senior mobile designer at its Dublin-based studio.

Specifically, the firm – famous for hits like *Bejewelled*, *Peggle* and *Plants vs Zombies*, all of which were developed in Seattle – is looking for "an experienced game designer tasked with working with a small, professional development team, looking for the challenge of adapting existing titles and creating brand spin offs, with the ability of moving the studio to original IP development on a variety of handheld, mobile and social platforms".

www.popcap.com

UNITED STATES

POPCAP PLOTS EXPANSION (PART TWO)

Meanwhile, PopCap Games has also secured an investment of $22.5 million.

The round of funding is the first in PopCap's ten-year history, and was led by late-stage investment firm VC Meritech Capital Partners.

"We're excited to have additional working capital that lets us be more aggressive with our expansion into social media and reaching new geographies," commented David Roberts, CEO of PopCap.

"We've been pursued by investment firms for many years and have resisted taking outside capital, but we liked Meritech's style and believe there's a tremendous opportunity to grow and evolve our business at a time when many other video game firms are retrenching."

www.popcap.com

UNITED STATES

HALO TRIO GO SOLO

Three former Bungie employees have formed a new independent outfit, Moonshot Games.

Having been heavily involved in one of the most lucrative and big-budget game series in history – *Halo*, if you needed reminding – the Moonshot founders have made a wholesale reversal to their game design philosophy, now pledging to build small downloadable titles on a modest budget.

"The Moonshot team firmly believes that the stars need not be limited to multi-million-dollar projects supported by armies of ground crew," read a statement from the new studio.

The developer has opened two offices within the US.

The studio's Seattle headquarters will be led by managing director Michel Bastien, who himself once acted as production lead of *Halo 2* and *Halo 3*. Moonshot's Boston office, meanwhile, will be headed up by Damián Isla, who worked on *Halo* games as AI and gameplay engineer lead.

www.moonshotgames.com

UNITED STATES

DIGITAL DOMAIN FOUNDS FLORIDA GAMES TEAM

Digital Domain, the Hollywood effects house co-chaired by *Transformers* director Michael Bay, is to open a fully fledged games production studio.

Based in Florida, the new team will founded using some $80 million in investments – a mix of money from its own coffers and public funding. $50m came from its new parent firm Wyndcrest Holdings, $10m from local property development agencies, plus a $20m grant from the state of Florida's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development.

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CRYENGINE 3 RELEASED

German studio Crytek's has released the latest version of its engine to developers.

CryENGINE 3 is available for PC, Xbox 360 and PS3. The engine's legacy is in FPSes – best showcased with the acclaimed 2007 title Crysis – but the Frankfurt-headquartered company has expanded CryENGINE 3's remit to MMOs as well.

Many developers will be most interested in the new CryENGINE 3 Sandbox level editor, an unfussy professional tool where the preview pane displays exactly what is seen in a playthrough.

The engine also comes with Live Create, a tool that allows developers to edit games on all available platofrms through a single dev PC.

Crytek CEO Cevat Yerli hailed the engine as "the best development solution available today and tomorrow."

Said Yerli: "With its scalable graphics and computation it is next-gen ready and with new features like CryENGINE 3 Live Create the best choice for game developers and companies developing serious games applications alike.

"It is the only game engine solution that enables real-time development and can ensure teams are able to maximise their own creativity, save budget and create greater gaming experiences."
www.crytek.com

The move makes good on a two-year-old promise by Bay to start making games. At the time, Bay said: "I make world-class images. Why not put those images into a game?"

According to Variety, the deal to open the production firm means Digital Domain has promised to create 500 graphics and computer arts jobs in the state of Florida paid an average of $65,000 each within four years.

Digital Domain already has its HQ in Los Angeles and a recently-opened studio in Vancouver. It employs around 330.
www.digitaldomain.com

POLAND
CD PROJEKT PLANS TO GO PUBLIC

Polish developer CD Projekt is the subject of a bizarre takeover offer by struggling IT company Optimus.

The developer of games including *The Witcher* has confirmed to *Develop* that Optimus has made an offer for the developer. The deal would effectively turn the developer into a publicly-listed company give it wider opportunities for investment.

"This means money for development of [the] whole company," a spokesperson told us. "This is very good news for us."
www.cdprojekt.com

UNITED KINGDOM
CODIES' MUSICAL CHAIRS

There were a few changes of senior staff at Codemasters last month.

Firstly, *DIRT* and *GRID* producer Gavin Raeburn – a 20-year games development veteran – has left the UK games firm to pursue personal projects. At Codemasters he was instrumental in spearheading a re-envisioning of the *Colin McRae* and *Race Driver* racing game franchises.

Meanwhile, Birmingham studio head Trevor Williams has left the firm, also to pursue new opportunities. He leaves exactly one year after his studio Swordfish was bought by Codemasters from Activision.

Williams is to be suceeded by Alex McLean, the co-founder of Pivotal. McLean became technical director at Codemasters earlier in the year following a stint working at Engine Room Games.
www.codemasters.com

UNITED KINGDOM
CASH INJECTION FOR ZATTIKKA

Casual game outfit Zattikka has won a ringing vote of confidence from two prominent entrepreneurs who helped established some of biggest names on the net.

Atomico Ventures is founded by Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis; two net veterans who established the likes of Skype, Joost, Joltid and Kazaa. The firm has now provided Zattikka with its first major investment deal.

Last month Zattikka announced the acquisition of Gimme5games and that firm's founder Matt Spall to its exec team.
www.zattikka.com

Giving a DAM: Metrics

This month, **Ben Board** looks at how you can incorporate metrics into a Live title...

ACHIEVEMENT UNLOCKED, ISSUE 100 – an event so monumental *Modern Warfare 2* considered waiting until Easter. 'Milestone' can be a curse word, but congratulations, *Develop*, on reaching yours – it's a privilege to be a part of it.

When Develop first hit the stands in December 2000, words like 'franchise' and even 'sequel' drew sneers from many shop-floor game developers, who figured that the only IP that mattered was original IP – not that they'd use marketing-ese like 'IP', of course. Hey, I was guilty too.

But I think we're getting over ourselves. The fact is, many (even most) triple-A titles these days are either iterations of, or planned to become, franchises: commercial ventures planned and executed by a group of deliciously varied talents including marketing, brand, finance, as well as game teams – which, a hundred print deadlines later, many devs would give their granny to be a part of.

So maybe your own title is designed to sire a sequel. In that case, you can influence its quality right now with metrics. Metrics let you learn how your game is really played: each time the player finishes a level, makes a headshot, hits the wrong button, fails for the tenth time, or whatever else you're interested in, you record it on Xbox Live, and then post-launch those stats will teach you fascinating lessons.

Achievements are the coarsest method, XLSP the most powerful, with hidden leaderboards a useful middle ground.

You don't have to wait for a sequel to benefit from the metrics you've captured. Create a balance file on your Per-Title Storage (TMS) or XLSP server, point your game code at it, and edit it in response to your findings. You needn't wait even that long: with a metrics-enabled build your QA and focus testers can be generating balance data for your designers right now.

Ben Board is a European developer account manager at Microsoft. He welcomes registered developers to contact him at eudam@microsoft.com.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS SPONSORED BY Bethesda SOFTWORKS

COMMENT: BUSINESS

Extraordinary Games Businesses 4: Ankama

by Rick Gibson, Games Investor Consulting

In the latest in our series of profiles of fascinating, rule-changing games companies, we skip over La Manche to look at France's largest independent developer, Ankama. The company is arguably one of the most ambitious in the industry, whose vision of products that aggressively expand across multiple games, online and broadcast media platforms can only be described by the word chutzpah.

The company was founded in 2001 in Lille, Northern France, by Flash developers keen to do games development but bootstrapped by commercial website design. The studio grew slowly at first, constrained by work for hire, and putting its downtime into designing a PvP combat game in flash entitled *DUEL*. The studio was extremely cautious through the beta period which lasted for nearly two years, finally hard launching *DUEL* – renamed as *Dofus* – in 2004 in France.

DOMINATING SUBS

By then *Dofus* had been reworked as a download-based isometric 2D role-playing game where players can choose between familiar fantasy classes, and conduct turn-based combat using spells and weaponary. Based on a model of a seven-day trial before subscription, *Dofus* grew steadily over the next year to half a million registrations but experienced the commonplace difficulty of converting free triallists to subscribers when the subscription barrier came slamming down. No doubt with an eye on *RuneScape* and other, earlier freemium games services, Ankama bit the bullet and introduced a permanently free play area with a burgeoning array of premium extensions for subscribers.

Freemium turbo-charged the company's revenues and its user base, transforming it from a niche MMO operator into a multi-title, multimedia powerhouse. Registrations leapt forward, reaching three million in 2006, seven million in 2007, ten million in 2008 and today the game stands at 22 million registrations, just over ten per cent of whom are subscribers. The company grew from 25 staff before going freemium to 400 today (nearly as many developers as Ubisoft's French studios combined). As the company grew, its true ambition became clear. Ankama Games was hived off when *Dofus* hard launched. In 2005, Ankama Publishing was launched to harvest Ankama IP in television via animated children's shows and Ankama Editions was formed to self-publish the manga-style comic *Mutafukaz* (no pun was intended, apparently). Kalmeo, a mobile division, was launched in 2007 to harvest its IP on mobile platforms. Recently, it opened an animation studio in Japan.

How did it achieve all this? With the decision to go 'free', the company carefully constructed a commercial model that has proved very successful at converting free players to subscribers. Ankama set out strict and aggressive barriers between free play and premium areas, keeping 90 per cent of the game world behind the velvet rope, and restricting progression in almost every area

> ***"Ankama is a stable, well-run business. It has great strengths in marketing, technical ability, quality in game design and communications."***

of gameplay beyond the first basic steps. This free vs premium split is at the heart of both the gameplay and the company's success. Subscription opens up a wide range of premium-only functionality, such as higher levels, classes and items, item creation, pet ownership, inter-player trading, PvP arenas and gifting. Subscribers can freely mix with non-subscribers, passively marketing the benefits of subscription. Yet the free game remains compelling and deep enough to hook new players and start to spin the social webs between other players. These extend so far that Ankama even runs regular festivals where *Dofus* players meet their online friends and the game's creators in the real world, costumes and all.

ANKARMA CHAMELEON

Ankama is a stable, very well-run business with sustainable cash-flow and has never resorted to external investment. It has great strengths in marketing, technical ability, quality of game design and communications. But there are contradictions. Its user base has remained unsurprisingly dominated by French speakers, with a smattering of other territories covered. For all its scale, Ankama has largely failed to break out of this geographical silo, a challenge for all continental online publishers. More dangerous is the company's ambitions in other media. Its strategy to flog the hell out of its brands on as many platforms as possible make it vulnerable to diffusion, and could siphon investment towards possibly reckless projects in other media, which could damage customer satisfaction. This risk is best illustrated by its biggest bet so far, *Wakfu*.

Dofus is a Flash-based multiplayer online game that has thrived on the 'fremium' business model

As *Dofus* nears the hard launch of its 2.0 version, Ankama has gradually been unveiling its next, even more ambitious title, *Wakfu*. It is 100 per cent built in Java and has better music, animation, scrolling navigation, complex in-game economies and, with typically boldness, no NPCs. *Wakfu* is being built for PCs, with mobile and Xbox Live extensions. It will also have a separate card game, a magazine, a comic, a television series and merchandising.

Ankama remains a formidable company – a classic online developer-publisher with a strong track record of delivering high quality games with great conversion ratios, and hooking huge audiences with compelling gameplay and appealing stories and characters. Whether *Wakfu* succeeds as *Dofus* has done will be interesting to watch.

Rick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing research, strategy consulting and corporate finance services to the games, media and finance industries.
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COMMENT: INDUSTRY

They shoot horses don't they?

by Owain Bennallack

Nearly all human life was represented on the cover of last month's *Develop*, which portrayed 200 development staff from Ubisoft Montreal.

There's the moody existential guy who is surely a character artist. A bald guy who perhaps handles networking code. An array of uncertain smiles of designers keen to be understood. A charismatic guy in a beanie – perhaps he does the website? And a suspiciously populous knot of women in the foreground.

Actually, I visited Ubisoft Montreal in the 1990s, and even then there were far more women in its game teams than at any other studio I had visited. If Ubisoft is still bringing more women into the games industry, then that's good going.

However, there is one key demographic that even Ubisoft excludes, going on what can be seen in that picture. Look more carefully. What don't you see? Grey hairs. Wrinkles. Walking sticks. Old people.

GROWING PAINS

The only obvious difference between that snapshot and the memories of my visit in the '90s are the clothes. The workforce looks pretty much the same. Game development is generally dominated by young people, and always has been.

In my teens I read about the Darling Brothers buying Ferraris while the ink was still wet on their driving licenses. That made sense: 8-bit games were written in bedrooms, and teenage boys were renowned for spending inordinate time there. Making games was a good fit.

It also made sense ten years later when I visited studios for *Edge*. The garage start-ups of the '80s were now located in industrial parks, the bedroom coders squeezed into loft-style offices, and the staff were in their twenties. Enduring the deprivations of game development for the chance of a big win, the industry was still a young person's game in the era of the PlayStation.

But things have surely changed. Young people might be best suited to risk self-publishing iPhone games or going it alone with browser-based fare, but multi-million dollar blockbuster game development has been thoroughly corporate-ised. And while you've got no chance of making a life-changing fortune working for EA or Ubisoft, you might just get a pension.

SHY AND RETIRING

Given that game development has matured into a big business, why hasn't the workforce grown-up too?

Zoe Mode's general manager, Ed Daly, explored this at Develop in Brighton. In a talk entitled 'Are You Going to Retire as a Game Developer?', he asked: "Do you see yourself modelling space marines and debugging renderers at 60? If not, when will you stop and what will you do next?"

The ensuing debate was fascinating, and suggested many facets to game development's cult of youth.

I asked Ed Daly why he now thought so many developers were young. "Because we are the first generation of game developers, and because we are, on the whole, alive-and-kicking. It naturally follows that the average age of a developer is young," Ed said. "How many retired developers do you know?"

> ***"8-bit titles were made in bedrooms; teenage boys were renowned for spending inordinate time there. Making games was a good fit."***

Ed also shared some interesting figures about the company. He informed me that the average age of Zoe Mode's 155 staff is 30, of whom 'juniors' are an average age of 25, while 'seniors' are on average 36.

"As well as being young, most staff reach the pinnacle of their careers after ten years, at least in terms of job titles and responsibility," Ed reflected. "By accelerating the pace of career development, we leave people with perhaps 30 years in the same position before they retire."

He pointed out another ramification of fast-track career paths: front-loaded salary scales that leave less room for manoeuvre later on.

"It gets complicated and I could go on," he said, concluding that: "At some point we need to figure out how lifelong careers should work."

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One of Ubisoft Montreal's bustling dev teams – bustling with young talent – featured in Develop last month

NO GOLDEN OLDIES

Ed's one of the few senior developers who has aired this issue and his insights are very pertinent. But I don't entirely agree that the industry itself is still young. As I said, I visited studios nearly 15 years ago packed with 20 and 30-somethings. By now they should be in, or nearing, their 40s – but where are they?

Perhaps the cliché of developers not getting enough sunlight has kept their skin young – or maybe they've left the industry. Next month I'll suggest reasons why.

Owain Bennallack is executive editor of *Develop*. He edited the magazine from its launch until its February 2006 issue. He has also worked at *MCV* and *Edge*, and has provided consultancy and evaluation services to several leading developers and publishers. He is also chairman of the Develop Conference advisory board.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS SPONSORED BY Bethesda SOFTWORKS

COMMENT: DESIGN

Characterisation vs Customisation

by Billy Thomson, Ruffian Games

In the past, characterisation was incredibly important in games – almost all of the most successful, well-known and much loved games had an iconic central character at their core. We started off with simple characters like Pac-Man, Mario and Sonic, then moved on to the likes of Donkey Kong, Duke Nukem and Pikachu, and in more recent times Gordon Freeman, Kratos and Marcus Phoenix.

What I like about all of these characters is that they are almost entirely devoid of customisation and the gaming public have never complained about that fact. We never felt the need to make Pac-Man red rather than yellow; we didn't want to shave Donkey Kong's hair off and give him a tattoo and we didn't wonder how Kratos would look with a nice swinging pony tail. So why are developers regularly feeling pressured into providing customisation options for main characters that simply don't provide any benefit other than letting the player do things like rob a bank while dressed up in a big banana suit? Are we reaching a level of expectation from the gaming public that suggests customisation is now more important to us in games than characterisation?

CUSTOM JOB

Looking around, it's not just gamers who are now expecting ever increasing levels of customisation options. If you buy a car you have an incredible array of options that you can tinker with; buy a phone and you can buy all manner of accessories to make it reflect your style and personality. You don't even need to choose from the pre-mixed colours of paint on offer, you can just bring in something with the colour and have it recreated for you – you can even customise greeting cards to suit your own personal needs. So why do I have a problem – there, I've said it – with the customisation of the main character in a video game?

I can completely understand the reasoning behind providing the player with a vast range of options for sculpting a character and then clothing and equipping them in MMO games, where there is no central character at the core of everything and the sense of creating a unique identity is more important than anything else in a game world with potentially thousands of others players, but I'm not so sure that I agree with this in other cases. Don't get me wrong – I'm all for giving the player what they want and what they paid for – but I struggle with this concept when it provides no meaningful benefit and runs the risk of ruining the experience that the development team have spent years crafting.

KILL WILL

Can you imagine the response an executive at a publisher would get if they asked Quentin Tarantino to make sure that his next film allowed the audience to select the clothing and hairstyle that the lead character would wear at the start of the film? Obviously, the cost to do this alone would doubtless kill the idea instantly, but I'd guess that the stronger argument would be why do it in the first place? What would it add to the viewer's experience? Surely it's more important to tell a compelling story, with the right balance of twists and turns mixed with jaw-dropping set pieces that provide the range of emotions that you're looking for? In my mind, these requirements and desired results for films seem to mirror perfectly with those of any triple-A console game of the current generation.

> ***"Some games base their franchise on the gaming world rather than the central character – I've always had a soft spot for the more memorable characters."***

I've thought about this a lot over the past year or so, as I deliberated over the level of customisation we would likely cater for in any game we make going forward, and I have to say that I much prefer the thought of creating a unique, compelling and hopefully memorable main character that players really grow to care about rather than creating a character that is essentially a blank canvas that the player can customise themselves to create their own unique character. I think the direction you take as a designer with the main character depends almost entirely on the type of game you're making. From my perspective the kind of games that I want to make in the future will work far better with a strong main character that we can build a fantastic game world around.

Some games base their franchise on the gaming world rather than the central character, but I've always had a soft spot for the more memorable characters – they're generally the franchises that I come back to again and again.

The majority of successful and well loved games have an iconic central character, like Mario, proving that characterisation isn't necessarily important

Billy Thomson is the creative director of newly-formed developer Ruffian Games. Billy has over 13 years experience of designing video games, including design roles on *Grand Theft Auto* and *GTA2*, before working as lead designer on Realtime Worlds' celebrated *Crackdown*.
www.ruffiangames.com

COMMENT: CODING

Stereoscopic 3D: Part 2

by David Jefferies, Black Rock Studio

Last month I discussed some of the options for supporting stereoscopic 3D in games and focused particularly on polarising LCD displays. These can be fairly cheap to manufacture – Zalman does a range of 19 and 22-inch stereo monitors for under £200, although larger models can cost many thousands – and they can be very effective. This month I'm exploring the disadvantages of these systems and looking at what alternatives are on the market.

Polarising LCD displays have one main disadvantage: the left and right eye images are displayed on alternating lines so each eye only sees half the vertical resolution of the display. How big an issue this is in practice is debatable. Sky is betting that it isn't a big issue, because it's planning on transmitting its 3D programs using the same amount of bandwidth as its HD programmes.

FEELING BLU

When the 3D standard for Blu-ray is implemented, the latest films will be released with 1080p resolution going to each eye. This will be unachievable on a polarising LCD and so many people are backing active shutter glasses rather than polarising LCD to be the de facto standard.

Active shutter glasses contain lenses of liquid crystal that darken when a voltage is applied, but otherwise are transparent. These are synchronised with a compatible LCD. The LCD alternates its display depending on whether the left or right eye is active. Usually you need the LCD to be alternating at 120Hz to prevent flickering.

Once you've splashed out £40 or £50 for the shutter glasses and a fair bit more for a compatible LCD running at 120Hz, then you'll get full HD resolution in each eye. There's no doubt that this will look great for 3D Blu-ray but things aren't quite so easy for console games. Current consoles hardly have the fill rate required to render non-trivial games at 1920x1080, let alone at the 1920x2160 resolution required to have full HD in each eye. The fill-rate limitations mean almost all current generation games run at approximately 1280x720, and doubling that so we get a full resolution image in each eye is a non-trivial engineering effort for games that haven't been designed from the beginning to support this technique.

To use our game *Split/Second* as a case study, we use a deferred shader renderer to depict our scene at 1280x720. We have a split screen game mode that, when divided horizontally, renders the scene at 1280x360. It's this mode that we can interlace with some trivial code to produce a stereoscopic version of the game.

The deferred shading renderer moves much of the complexity of rendering the scene from the vertex units to the pixel units and it's this characteristic which makes our split screen so effective. For this we have to render the vertices (the cheap bit) twice, but we only shade the same number of pixels (the expensive bit) as the full screen mode.

> ***"3D technology is still in its infancy, therefore one of the problems developers have to overcome is the lack of standards that are available."***

However, this characteristic also makes doubling the pixel resolution to full resolution in each eye prohibitively expensive. There are techniques we can use to reduce some of the cost of the other calculations. We can take advantage of the fact that the eyes are close together to only cull the scene once and only render the dynamic shadows once, but we'll never get around the fundamental requirement of having to shade double the number of pixels as the single player game.

DOUBLE STANDARDS

3D technology is still in its infancy, therefore one of the problems developers have to overcome is the lack of standards that are available. There are many different ways of getting the two eye images to your display device. They can be interlaced, or placed side-by-side, or they can be displayed one on top and the other underneath. It is vital to remember though, that different displays expect the image in different formats.

Black Rock has tested 3D gaming using its new title, Split/Second

The situation will become much clearer after the HDMI 1.4 standard has been widely adopted. For a display to be HDMI 1.4 compliant it must support several of the different 3D formats including side-by-side and interlaced. The source device can then choose to output the image using one of these formats.

The catch is that HDMI 1.4 display devices won't start to come onto the market until the end of the year and whether or not the Xbox 360 or PS3 eventually have their firmware updated to support HDMI 1.4 remains to be seen.

Until then, games will have to tip-toe around the standards issue by supporting the most popular display formats and allowing the user to choose which is most appropriate for their display device.

David Jefferies started in the industry at Psygnosis in Liverpool in 1995, eventually working on *Global Domination* and *WipEout 3*. He later moved to Rare where he worked on the *Perfect Dark* and *Donkey Kong* franchises. Next came a move down to Brighton to join Black Rock Studio (which was then known as Climax Racing) in 2003. On this generation of consoles he's been the technical director of *MotoGP'06* and *MotoGP'07* before starting work on new racer *Split/Second*.
www.blackrockstudio.com

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Phil Harrison, p34

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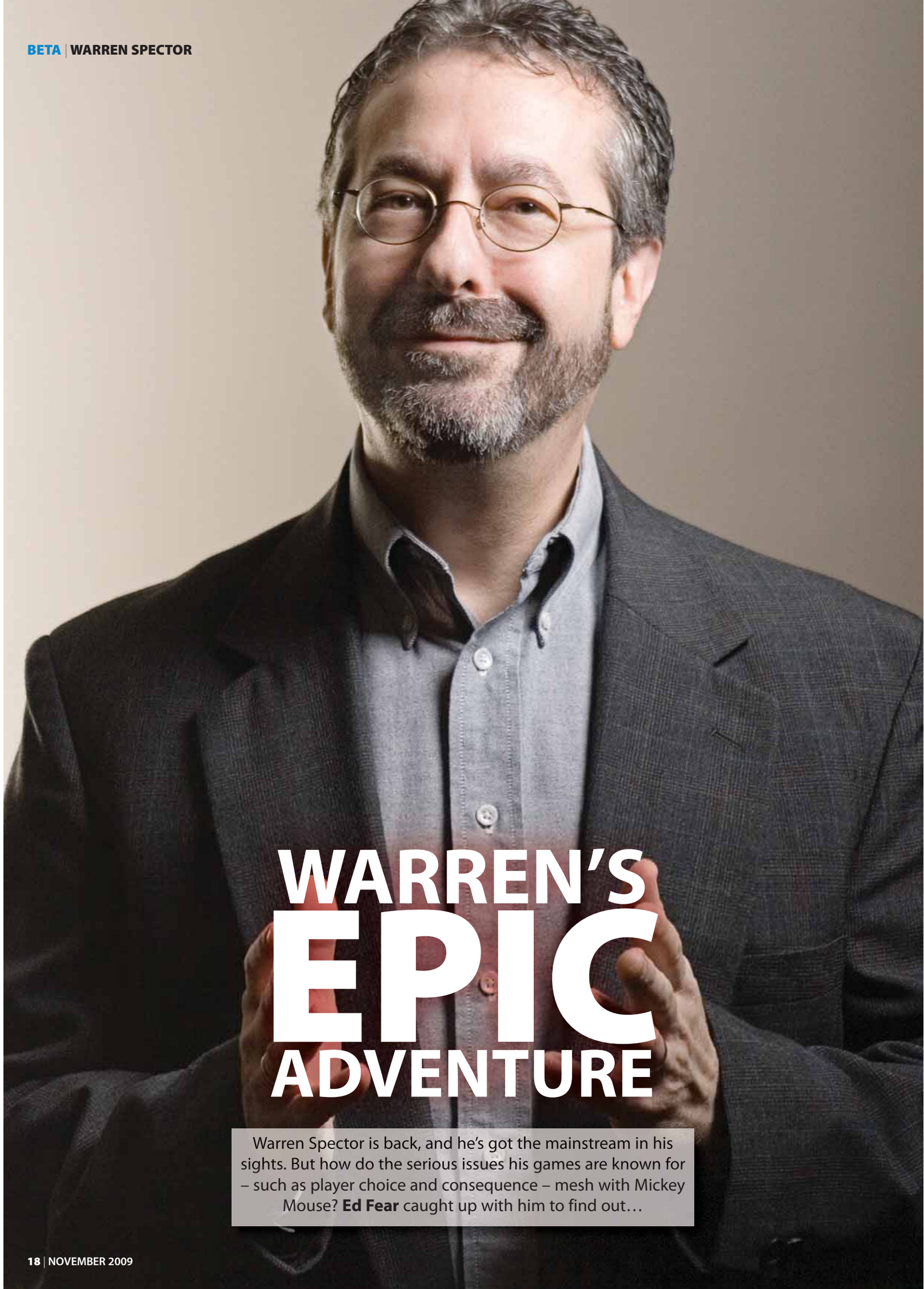
Mouse keeping

One of the world's most hard-core game designers is facing his greatest challenge: reinventing Mickey Mouse, p18



WARREN'S EPIC ADVENTURE

Warren Spector is back, and he's got the mainstream in his sights. But how do the serious issues his games are known for – such as player choice and consequence – mesh with Mickey Mouse? **Ed Fear** caught up with him to find out…

There was a time – not so long ago, in fact – when Warren Spector was one of the biggest names in game design.

Although his history with Origin and subsequently Looking Glass covers some of the biggest (and most frequently referenced) games ever – *Wing Commander, Ultima Underworld, System Shock* – it was his work at Ion Storm, specifically *Deus Ex*, that he became widely known. A slightly less well-received sequel later, and Spector left Ion Storm to start out afresh, founding Junction Point Games. And then, nothing.

The occasional interview here and there revealed that he was hard at work on something; a 'dream project' by all accounts. Four years later, the veil has been lifted – and standing there in the middle of the stage is perhaps not the trenchcoat-draped figure we were expecting, but Mickey Mouse.

What would cause a developer of hardcore sci-fi and fantasy games to create a licensed game about, quite possibly, the most vanilla character of all time? We sat down with Spector to find out more about *Epic Mickey*.

First off, how did you come to team up with one of the most famous cartoon characters of all time?

It's definitely a long strange trip, I'll say that. I left Ion Storm and Eidos in 2004 to set up an independent development studio – I wanted to run my own show and had some very specific things I wanted to do. I wasn't feeling like I was going to get a lot of support form publishers at that point.

I was out shopping a bunch of game proposals around with my agent, Seamus Blackley. There was an epic fantasy game I've wanted to do for quite a while, and I also had more stories I wanted to tell in the *Deus Ex* universe – and even though I didn't own that universe any more, I figured that there was a way to spin it into a new world that was *Deus Ex*-like, frankly.

So I was out pitching that, and Seamus said one day that we should talk to Disney. I said 'You know, I don't think they are going to be interested in my epic fantasy game or my science fiction, M-rated, sunglasses-at-night, two-guns-long-trenchcoat game.' But he said they were changing, and that they were looking for new things, and that I should try them.

So I'm stood there in a room full of Disney Interactive execs, and midway through my pitch I see they are all looking down at their BlackBerrys checking their email. I thought: 'I was right! I am going kill Seamus'.

What was actually going on was that they were interested, but they were texting each other, asking 'Shall we ask him if he's interested in this Mickey game?' It gets to the end of my pitch and they ask me how I felt about licensed games I said, 'Actually, I am really interested in them'.

I'm surprised you said that – after all, you were shopping around original IP.

Well, I had just given the GDC design keynote about licensed games but I'd never made one; I felt weird talking about it. So I said sure, and they asked if there were any Disney properties I'd be interested in. I have been a Disney fan since way back, so I rattled off a bunch of ideas – they then said 'How do you feel about making a Mickey Mouse game?' And I said 'No.' They went 'No?!'

> ***"There was no way that Disney was going to give away the keys to the kingdom – no way they would let their icon be remade for games by an external studio."***

The short of it is that Disney has done such a good job keeping Mickey what he is, they have lost the older audience. I don't make games for kids. He's a great icon, and I had my Mickey Mouse shirts as a kid – but as a character players want to be, or that movie goers watch, he just isn't that guy anymore.

They said, 'That's it! We want someone to come in and bring Mickey back. Make him what he was and can be again.' They told me to make Mickey relevant to 13 to 24-year-old boys: don't lose the kids or the parents, but make him relevant to gamers. I said 'That's impossible – I'm totally in.' How could I say no to that? So that's where it started, back in late 2005.

They had been thinking about it for some time. Disney Interactive has a think tank where they bring in a bunch of interns and Disney employees, and they come up with cool ideas – and one of them was the genesis of this project.

So has the game been in development all this time?

Well, Disney and I have had an off again/on again romance. We haven't been working consistently for five years on this. I got together with two long time collaborators, and the three of us spent four or five months developing the concept, finalising the design documents and all that. But by mid 2006 we couldn't come up with the deal – so we took a year off from it and did some other stuff.

We did some concept work with Valve, and I worked with John Woo on a ninja game and movie. But in 2007 Disney Interactive came back and said 'We've been looking for someone to do the game based on your concept but couldn't find anyone right.' It was one of the most flattering moments in my life. So we tried to figure out what the deal could be, and by E3 we had worked out the details. So June 2007 it was the real start.

How did the acquisition of Junction Point fit into that?

That was the detail that needed to be worked out! There was no way Disney was going to give away the keys to the kingdom – no way would they let the icon that is Mickey Mouse be remade for games by an external studio.

They made it clear that if I wanted to make the game – and I really wanted to make the game – it was going to be as part of Disney. So they put a package together that was enough, because I really wanted to make the game but didn't want to sell. I like being an independent developer, but you can always go for a second start-up – you never get a second shot at doing Mickey Mouse.

Below: Mickey's appearance changes depending on the player's actions

Above: The Junction Point team in suitably casual pose

I imagine there was some reticence because you've said that you didn't want to be tied in to a publisher.
Exactly. The irony of this is not lost on me! It was strange; the acquisition of a studio that hasn't shipped a game is a little odd in itself. And like I say I really didn't want to sell, but I have been a Disney fan for my entire life.

I have a little checklist with tickboxes of things to do before I shuffle off this mortal coil, and working for Disney was one of those unticked boxes. So taking the opportunity was absolutely the right thing to do.

You've mentioned to us previously that you quite wanted to be an Imagineer [the division of Disney that designs rides for its theme parks].
I started out doing table top games doing Steve Jackson games in 1983, and in 1987 I went to TSR working on *Dungeons and Dragons*. There was a moment in 1988 when I was sat at my desk in TSR and we were starting to think about the next game system and the rules we were going to build, and I realised I had to do something else.

I knew it was going to be one of two things: either electronic games or an Imagineer. I talked to folks at Imagineering, I made it through two rounds of phone interviews, but Orgin made me an offer before the Imagineering guys could decide if they wanted me. Luckily Origin was a place where we created worlds, so it was almost like Imagineering in a way.

As someone who has always had an interest in Disney and its characters and history, this must be perfect for you to be able to access 'the vaults'.
I am the proverbial kid in a candy shop! Just getting to hang out in the Disney archive is crazy, and I've sent guys out to do research that you wouldn't believe. We have thousands of images of characters, model sheets, background paintings, and sketches for characters that never made it to the screen, blueprints of theme park attractions, memos from Walt to his employees… the stuff Disney has is overwhelming. And I was a film history guy – I was teaching film history and criticism for years and thought that was going to be my life before I got into games. For me, this game brings everything I love together in one place. I feel like the luckiest guy in the world. It's outrageous.

> ***"There's a weird freedom that comes with not having to try to do in real-time what Pixar does in film. Instead of worrying about glitz on Wii, you can think about gameplay."***

One of the things that is public about Epic Mickey is that it is on the Wii. What's the idea behind that?
We spent a lot of time in the early phases of the second round of the project, in 2007, doing a lot of pre-production and prototyping for a lot of platforms – at that point it wasn't clear what the dominant platforms would be, and we did a lot of work on other platforms in addition to the Wii. One day I was talking to [DIS boss] Graham Hopper, and he asked me what it would take to ensure the level of quality we are shooting for. My answer was that it takes enough time, enough money, and that it's nice when you can focus on a single platform.

I'm cutting out some details, but he said: 'What do you think about a Wii exclusive?' My jaw hit the ground, but it made a lot of sense. Imagine trying to convince the people who want to be Master Chief, or a thug in a crime game, or a super villain – imagine asking them to be Mickey Mouse. But then think about the great characters on Nintendo platforms – Mario, Link, even Sonic now – it feels right from that perspective.

There's a weird freedom that comes with not having to worry about trying to do in real-time what Pixar does pre-rendered. Instead of worrying about glitz on Wii you think about gameplay. How cool is that?

Also, a lot of the mechanics of the game rely on drawing in the game – using paint and paint thinner to make things go away – so it's natural to see gestural controls with the Wii remote work well. The audience is receptive and already exists, it matches our core mechanics, and the opportunity to focus on gameplay – why wouldn't we do that?

But to play devil's advocate, you said the plan is to bring Mickey Mouse to a contemporary audience, not just children but adults too – wouldn't it be easier to target them on a platform that has a slightly older demographic?
Well, I don't know anybody that doesn't have a Wii. One of the things that surprised me about Disney is that you think they make entertainment for children. But in discussions with people at Pixar or Disney feature animation I learned that, yeah, there are times when Disney has been really good at targeting specific demographics, but the real goal of the company has been to create entertainment for families. It's entertainment for everybody.

So if you're going to go after everybody, the Wii is a pretty good place to do that. The 360 probably has more of the hardcore gamers, and the PS3 is certainly coming along now – more thanks to the price drop than anything else, I think – but the Wii really is sort of the 'entertainment for everybody' platform, and so it fits the company's goals really well.

It also fits where I am in my life. I don't really want to make entertainment for teenagers anymore. The games that I have worked on have always appealed to an older audience – the average player of the *Deus Ex* series was around 30, which was kinda crazy – but it's nice to create something that appeals to as many people as possible. It's an interesting challenge, and I hope the whole idea of games that are about player choice and consequence can reach all those audiences. Kids might play the game and be as destructive or actiony as they can, or players that are older might take a slower pace to take more interesting solutions to problems. So, platform, game, me personally – it all just works , it feels right and makes sense to me.

Given your history of the titles you have worked on, is it safe to assume that Epic

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Left: Epic Mickey in action

Mickey is not 'just another' character action platformer? Is this an evolution of the things you have worked on before?
Yeah. The first time I met with Disney I said: 'I don't do budgets, I don't do schedules and I don't make games for kids. I make games that are about choice and player consequences. If you don't like that we'll part ways, stay friends, and I wish you the best of luck.'

I've worked on 19 games in various capacities, and for me I don't care how the rest of the world sees them. They are all a progression in a very specific direction – they are all about empowering players to be creative, to solve problems the way they want, be who they want to be and have the game respond to who they are and how they are behaving.

That is very much the heart of the Mickey game as well – when you try to take a character that has so much appeal to so many people for so many different reasons, it would be the height of arrogance for me to say 'This is what makes Mickey cool, take it or leave it'. So the heart of the game is about every player telling me what they think is cool about Mickey.

If you like Mickey the way he his today, you can be the helpful, playful, wouldn't-hurt-a-fly guy – and your character will look and feel like the modern Mickey people know and love. If you are inspired by the early very badly behaved Mickey of the '20s and '30s, then you can behave that way – selfish, straightforward, destructive and mischievous. If that's what people think is cool they can behave that way – and their Mickey will look different, have different abilities and characters in the world will react differently. So it's definitely a progression in this theme that has been 19 games in the making so far.

So it's fair to say that theme permeates through everything that Junction Point does?
I have always been a guy that believes studios and teams need a mission. The first two entries I wrote on my blog is the long version of the studio's mission statement – I put it on my blog because nobody on my team would let me put it on our website, because it's so long no one would read it. Over the years I have whittled it down – I've got a four-page version, a one-page version and a single paragraph. A couple of months ago I finally came up with the two word version of Junction Point's mission – and so I'm trying to get it out there everywhere I go, and it's this: 'Playstyle matters'. If you've ever been to our offices they are written as 12-inch high letters on the wall in our office.

On *Epic Mickey* specifically I want people coming in asking 'Am I making Mickey cooler today?' If the answer is no I need them to find something else to do. It's not about how clever the designer is, it's about how clever the players are; it's not about the story I am telling players, it's the story I am telling with players. Every player needs to have a unique experience – that is our goal here.

> ***"The first time I met with Disney I said: 'I don't do budgets, I don't do schedules and I don't do games for kids. I make games that are about choice and player consequences.'"***

I was so happy that I'd managed to come up with something so concise, because I am such a wordy bastard – that's what they call me here at the studio. When everybody thinks about Junction Point they need to think that it's the place where 'playstyle matters'. Whether it is a cartoon game, aliens invading the earth game, or a *Tetris* clone, our versions of all of those will be about playstyle mattering.

How comfortable have Disney been with you taking Mickey into a different direction, against his sterile image?
Remember that we are dealing with the character who is on everybody's pay cheque – there are lines you just don't cross, and there are things that even I don't want to do with Mickey. I've been pleased and surprised of how people at Disney understand how people both love Mickey and, yes, acknowledge that he has become a little sterile.

There are a lot of things going on at Disney that will surprise the industry over the coming years, but at the same time they look after their properties. I've tried to cross some lines and, y'know, they've urged me not to cross them. But they are more open than you might expect – they haven't flat out said 'no' to a lot of stuff that I have wanted to do.

One of the biggest things has been getting people to understand why Mickey changes the way he looks and what that means. I've insisted it won't confuse anybody – it's just the character that you create. It's not like Mickey is going to be shooting guns or smoking cigarettes any time soon. Who is going to want to do that anyway?

It seems odd that you almost became an Imagineer working on linear theme rides, but instead you became not just a game designer, but *the* game designer famous for making sure players have choices in their games.
It is funny, but over the years Disney has realised what everyone else has realised – that interactive entertainment is 'the next big thing'. We are the future, and everybody realises that. We're not some niche medium that is going to go away – the days when people thought that is long gone. Look what goes on in theme parks now – *Toy Story Mania* and the *Indiana Jones* ride have some flexibility. The idea is that everything needs to have interactivity.

Here's the big secret, and I hope everyone at Disney reads this: I have that list of things before they die, and one of them is still to make a theme park ride. And I'm a lot closer to that now than I was as an independent. There is a lot more we can do on the interactive side at the parks, if they are interested and they want to talk.

You mentioned some projects earlier that you were shopping around. Do you see the Disney family as a place where those projects can grow?
Absolutely. My sense is that Disney Interactive sees itself as a place where new properties can be created that can then be brought into other parts of the organisation. Just speaking personally, it would be very sad if the video games side of the company didn't generate characters, stories and settings that were compelling enough that the larger organisation didn't want to turn into movies, DVDs, comic books and cartoons.

So it's something I am hugely interested in – and Disney does now own that near-future sci-fi game I was talking about and the epic fantasy I mentioned. So who knows – I certainly have ideas of how they would work in a Disney context.

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A whole lotta history

100 issues chronicling the highs and lows of development. **Ed Fear** takes a look back at the past nine years…

ISSUE 1 - DECEMBER 2000

Starting in style as always, we had Kuju's Ian Baverstock writing that the small studios undercutting their rivals were going to kill Britsoft. Elsewhere, Nokia evangelised WAP, and the topic of pub 'roundtable' discussion was the difficulty of PS2. If only they'd known.

ISSUE 2 - JANUARY 2001

Our first look at development's up-and-coming talent featured names like Media Molecule co-founder Alex Evans (and a few who are now AFK). Also, Ed Daly argued against Ian Baverstock's previous editorial and there was even more waffle about WAP. Like, get a room.

ISSUE 3 - FEBRUARY 2001

A controversial cover story examined the 'over-financed' French, Brian Jobling attempted to soothe the dev/pub divide, the *Develop* pub discussion tackled the Game Boy Advance. Plus we ran our first ever project management software guide. Start as we mean to go on, eh?

ISSUE 4 - MARCH 2001

This issue asked whether the development gamble was working, International Hobo's Chris Bateman wrote *Develop*'s first article on outsourcing, and physics made its assault on games. Oh, and Motorola held another conference about WAP. Seriously? Enough.

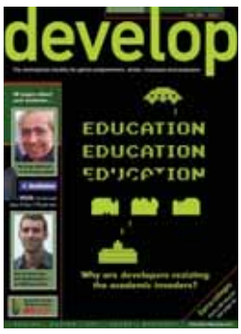
ISSUE 5 - APRIL 2001

'Digital distribution will change everything,' our cover proclaimed – something most of us are still waiting to happen. There was also sage advice for dealing with PS2 development, plus a round-up of studio websites, including Lionhead's brilliant GeoCities look-a-like.

ISSUE 6 - MAY 2001

Not content with stirring up a hornet's nest in issue three, this time it was America's turn to have its dev dominance examined. Most importantly, this was the first issue without Billie Piper present for the roundtable, this time replaced by Vanessa Paradis. Sob.

ISSUE 7 - JUNE 2001



Develop's first ever article on education, and the quotes are the same now as they were then: 'Not enough maths and physics, but Abertay, Teesside and Bournemouth are excellent.' There was also advice for those looking to target the growing female gamer market.

ISSUE 8 - JULY 2001

'Why publishers have messed up the business of making games,' read this issue's strapline. Gulp. Elsewhere *Fable* maestro Dene Carter talked about the unveiling of the then-named *Project Ego*, and Richard Jacques wrote about making game scores more cinematic.

ISSUE 9 - AUGUST 2001

A whopping special feature delved into the murky world of financing outside of going cap in hand to a publisher (notice a theme?). Also, Sony talked up its internet plans at DevStation – no comment – and we ran a really gratuitous picture of girls kissing.

ISSUE 10 - SEPTEMBER 2001

Always happy to push back the taste barrier, this feature on sex in games featured some, er, quite choice imagery. Madonna made her second appearance in the *Develop* pub discussion, while Byronicman lamented the MIA status of many Britsoft founders.

ISSUE 11 - OCTOBER 2001

We looked at the rise of Eastern European developers, Cliff Bleszinski worried about the design challenges real-time physics would bring, and the pub chat focused on the thorny question of game content in the short-term aftermath of September 11th.

ISSUE 12 - NOVEMBER 2001

The spotlight fell this month on the success of Australian developers – Infrogrames was planning to pump AUS $50m (about 30p, right?) into the territory. Meanwhile, Elixir's Alex Whitaker argued that programmers shouldn't be the ones designing AI – still a good point.

ISSUE 13 - JANUARY 2002

Five big ideas: some came to pass (MMS, virtual commodities, smart middleware), some didn't (all-freelance teams) and some were pure pie in the sky (a copyright-less world. Ha!). Also, Orange claims that 40 per cent of its WAP traffic is games-related. Hmmm.

ISSUE 14 - FEBRUARY 2002

We looked at the importance of IP, plus long-time reader and quote machine Seamus Blackley finally got a proper interview. Charles Cecil also talked up set-top box gaming. Forget the Wii and iTV; remote-controlled gaming peaked with *Bamboozle!* on Teletext.

ISSUE 15 - MARCH 2002

The failings of games writing and linear storytelling played a part in this issue, and Peter Molyneux also had his first interview, in which he stated – with no speculation – that Dmitri would be out in 2005. Some kids just really don't want to come out, huh.

ISSUE 16 - APRIL 2002

About time too: finally the burgeoning development scene in the North got to step into the *Develop* spotlight. Also, Yuji Naka told us how 'angry' he was at naughty gamers 'destroying' *Phantasy Star Online*, and Harry Gregson-Williams talked scoring *MGS2*.

ISSUE 17 - MAY 2002

The ultimate guide to selling out – we mean, er, up – dominated our cover, while Martyn Brown warned that developers needed to grow up and accept that bedroom development was dead. We also took a look at natural language processing and what it could bring to games.

ISSUE 18 - JUNE 2002

This issue's cover feature looked at how game development ran on brotherly love, such as the Darlings, the Pickfords, the Joblings, the Carters, the Simpsons, the Olivers, the Falcuses, the Kinglseys, the Gollops, the Stampers, the Heath-Smiths, the Collyers…

ISSUE 19 - JULY 2002

Introversion's Chris Delay introduced us to the indie upstarts fresh from their success with *Uplink*, Seamus Blackley began his monthly column of irreverence with a tirade against E3, and we relocated the *Develop* pub to the US for an Uncle Sam-themed chew of the fat.

ISSUE 20 - AUGUST 2002

In this writer's humble opinion one of *Develop*'s best ever features, a young Ben Cousins – then of *BC* developer Intrepid – wondered if there already existed a standard language for game design. The data is still worth investigating for anyone designing control systems.

ISSUE 21 - SEPTEMBER 2002

A controversial cover story argued that developers would be more successful if they focused on cashflow as much as polygons, while Eutechnyx's Kev Shaw wrote pointlessly about how games should be pointless, and DirectX 9 changed graphics programming forever.

ISSUE 22 - OCTOBER 2002

Rebellion's Chris Kingsley lead a gang of top developers to gush on how amazing it was to work on licensed games. And not a restriction on creativity. At all. Honest. No, really. We also spoke to the Stampers after Microsoft's huge cash-spunk to buy Rare.

ISSUE 23 - NOV/DEC 2002

It was Dundee's turn to fall under the *Develop* sector microscope, including the then-still-young Realtime Worlds. Elsewhere, it was a pretty dry issue: a discussion about asset management, programming tools, and a slightly racist advert on the back page.

ISSUE 24 - JANUARY 2003

Another controversial cover saw Kevin Buckner (who?) of Design Games (who?) tell readers that they were 'wasting half of their working days'. Zed Two also sold out to Warthog, which ended up coming back to bite them, and Game Connection ran for the first time.

ISSUE 25 - FEBRUARY 2003

Bullfrog co-founder and super investment daddy Les Edgar warned that the next 18 months were going to be difficult for British independent studios. Game writer Susan O'Connor discussed how to appeal to women, and there was a nice picture of a cat. Aaaaw.

ISSUE 26 - MARCH 2003

Warthog director Ian Grieve and Dene Carter ended up scrapping over licensed vs. original games, *Develop* favourite Martin Hollis called voilence 'fascinating', and an empassioned editorial defended the N-Gage from early criticism. Oh Owain, *Owain*…

ISSUE 27 - APRIL 2003

Another quite glum cover highlighted the worsening conditions facing developers, although the news pages were filled with publishers looking for product. Recruitment was a timely focus, and a dude from Xbox told us why voice chat was, like, *so* super rad.

ISSUE 28 - MAY 2003

Final Fantasy movie worker bee Kevin Bjorke told us how games were going to ape the cinematic touches of Hollywood, Ubisoft boss Yves Guillemot said that developers weren't investing enough in their staff, and Seamus Blackley developed a conscience, of all things.

ISSUE 29 - JUNE 2003

Ubisoft: 1,287 development staff and no blubber. So went our headline, which took a look at the nu-French Empire. And this was all pre-Montreal takeover. Elsewhere John Riccitiello got a bit shirty with us, and we looked at best practice for asset repeating in games.

ISSUE 30 - JULY 2003

The finalists for the very first Develop Awards were profiled in an arty cover, while Game Republic talked about its formation. Meanwhile, neon-haired ninja Tameem Antonaides discussed adaptive difficulty balancing in the awesome *Kung Fu Chaos*.

ISSUE 31 - AUGUST 2003

Any excuse to get a girl on the cover. Here we looked at how 'style' was leapfrogging technology to become the new over-riding force of game art in games like *Broken Sword 4*, *Viewtiful Joe* and *XIII*. Meanwhile Blitz wrote about developing killer in-house tools.

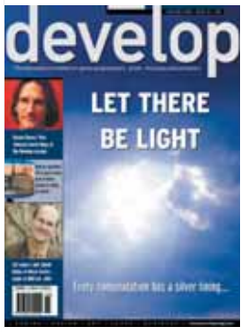
ISSUE 32 - SEPTEMBER 2003

In the aftermath of the first Develop Awards, we went coverage crazy. Speaking of crazy, we awarded of the Grand Prix award to Climax, but hey, I'm not judging (and clearly neither were they). Elsewhere in this slow month: four pages from lawyers and two on copy-protection. Hmm.

ISSUE 33 - OCTOBER 2003

Former *Develop* technology editor Jon Jordan, he of various clashing hair and nail polish fame, travelled to Seattle to talk to Gabe Newell about the (then-controversial) release of Steam. Elsewhere, the Creative Assembly got *Total War* on the BBC. Back on form.

ISSUE 34 - NOV/DEC 2003



Ah, a positive cover to break the gloom: apparently, while more indie studios were closing by the day, big devs were ramping up significantly. Meanwhile, EA's music bod Steve Schnur talked about wanting to break catsuit wonders The Darkness in the US. Weirdly.

ISSUE 35 - JANUARY 2004

The first ever Develop survey asked 100 developers about the issues affecting them. Only three per cent saw Canada as a threat to UK dev jobs, and the majority thought 360/PS3 teams would peak at 50 people. They must be kicking themselves now.

ISSUE 36 - FEBRUARY 2004

Jeremy Heath-Smith told us why he left the Eidos boardroom to start Circle Studios (that went well, eh?) and shared pitch horror stories from the publisher's side. Meanwhile, Byronicman lamented the poor success of Ubisoft's *Prince of Persia* and *Beyond Good and Evil*.

ISSUE 37 - MARCH 2004

The unhealthy crunch habits of the games industry were the subject of *Develop*'s steely glare, something we'd return to regularly with our crusading hat on. Elsewhere there was a spotlight on the Russian game biz and its yearly development conference KRI.

ISSUE 38 - APRIL 2004

Our first ever audio-focused cover spoke to composer James Hannigan, while Microsoft unveiled XNA – although, obviously, they wouldn't know what it was themselves for a good two years yet, let alone the rest of us. Best *Edge* cover ever, that one.

ISSUE 39 - MAY 2004

"Will 3D mobile hit the jackpot?" screamed the cover. "No," we reply, smug in our 2009 hindsight. "Not until the iPhone it won't, but even then the lack of physical controls will pretty much destroy any possibility of responsive input." A shuffle of feet. "I was only asking :("

ISSUE 40 - JUNE 2004

Inon Zur and Bungie's audio deity Marty O'Donnell jammed over game music in the Develop Session, Epic unveiled the still-snazzy Unreal Engine 3 (shame that one didn't catch on, eh?) and Byronicman left us. Well, left us the first time. Well, he was kind of pushed, I guess.

ISSUE 41 - JULY 2004

There's nothing that the games development industry loves more than event fights: Gamescom vs. Leipzig, London Games Festival vs. GameCity, and here GDC Europe versus the European Developers Forum. Neither survived (in the UK, anyway). Develop wins!

ISSUE 42 - AUGUST 2004

Another slightly weird Develop Awards themed cover here. Former *Edge* editor Joao Diniz Sanches joined *Develop* as features editor after the spectacular staff walkout of 2004. Walkout of *Edge*, that is – not *Develop*. We're too lazy, plus we have absolutely no morals.

ISSUE 43 - SEPTEMBER 2004

Sega turned its eyes to European developers and we, in turn, turned our eyes to them. (They call that eye contact.) Elsewhere, developers reacted to EA's purchase of Renderware – now seen as pretty much the worst move for everyone involved in that deal, really.

ISSUE 44 - OCTOBER 2004

Awww. Our first Peter Molyneux cover – and, given the complaints we got over the most recent one, probably our best. There was much more celebration of our awards, once again hosted by Channel 4 news robot Krishnan Guru-Murthy. We'd have preferred Jon Snow.

ISSUE 45 - NOV/DEC 2004

Jonathan Smith from Giant/TT/Traveller's Tales (oh, I give up) talks about getting that Lego licence – really not going anywhere, that one – and we looked at the growing trend of multi-site distributed development. And, er, not a whole lot more, really. Sorry about that.

ISSUE 46 - JANUARY 2005

Uh-oh! Everyone was scared of going under. "Will you survive '05?" the cover screamed. Those who presumably answered 'no' included: Hunter S. Thompson, Pope John Paul II, Mo Mowlam, Ronnie Barker, George Best and, er, Singapore's president Wee Kim Wee. Titter.

ISSUE 47 - FEBRUARY 2005

Ubisoft's creative superman Michel Ancel discussed targeting the mainstream with his game adaptation of *King Kong*, and we had our first ever Brighton special. Here's a fun game: compare these pictures with those in issue 85, and see life take its toll.

ISSUE 48 - MARCH 2005

If it's any consolation, we can't even quite believe we put Marc Ecko on the cover, either. Inside, and totally separate (obviously) was the 'top 25 businessmen in games development' which, er, included some real strange picks. Oh well. Opinions, arseholes, etc.

ISSUE 49 - APRIL 2005

This issue looked at how the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 would change development, and predicted a split into two camps: those devs that will ally themselves to one publisher and those that would make bits of games instead of whole products.

ISSUE 50 - MAY 2005

Hooray! We're halfway there. In this landmark issue we did pretty much what I'm doing here (*What, crying and reeking of gin? – Ed.*) PhysX made its first uneven steps to market, and we also looked once again to Hollywood, and launched the very first Develop 100.

ISSUE 51 - JUNE 2005

It was the biggest E3 ever – Microsoft revealed the sleek concave curves on the Xbox 360, and, er, Sony revealed that boomerang PS3 controller – and we spoke to a bunch of developers to see what they thought of the new systems.

ISSUE 52 - JULY 2005

Tim Christian told us all about buying Dundee dev Visual Science. This issue's tiny stories were far more interesting, though: we took a peek behind the curtain of Dare to be Digital, Telltale and Steve Ince talked about starting small, and Blitz focused on quality of life.

ISSUE 53 - AUGUST 2005

Another games development vs. academia battle royale? Nope, just a reasoned discussion of what universities had to – and, in some cases, still have to – address in order to keep up with the rapidly changing game technology field. Good cover, though.

ISSUE 54 - SEPTEMBER 2005

Well, in hindsight it seems quite the cover, but let's not forget that at the time Sega was actually positive about investing in a racing studio. We couldn't have known then that they'd have given up at the first bump in the road. We also took a look at .NET's place in game dev.

ISSUE 55 - OCTOBER 2005

David Braben clutches his Development Legend award from the third Develop Awards proudly on the cover, and we go photo crazy within. Design supremos talked about the fallacy of formal design in the Develop Session, and the *Heavenly Sword* team talked pre-viz.

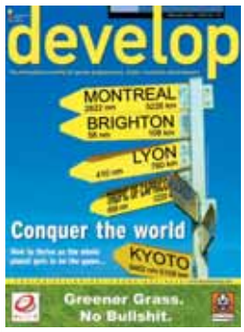
ISSUE 56 - NOV/DEC 2005

It's recruitment time! A mix of happiness and gloom permeates thisseries of articles, with (most likely optimistic) salary guides and recruiter profiles. The usual boring stuff. Elsewhere, Studio Cambridge told us about their harrowing beta period on *24*.

ISSUE 57 - JANUARY 2006

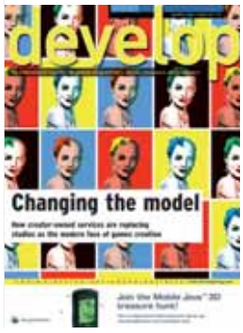
In what is most definitely the gayest *Develop* cover ever – and we once dragged up as Hyacinth Bucket for a Halloween party, so we know gay – Richard Garriott opined that the games industry was still a Wild West ripe for exploitation by canny business pioneers.

ISSUE 58 - FEBRUARY 2006



We looked at the new global hotspots for game dev, Miles Jacobson espoused the benefits of developers hiring their own PR firms, SCEE told us that procedural content would 'define the next generation,' and Intel said multi-threading was the future.

ISSUE 59 - MARCH 2006



With a cover article about outsourcing, the cool content was relegated to the sidelines: an interview with Crystal Dynamics, usurpers of Lara's crown; and a discussion on what makes the perfect racing game with bods from Codemasters, Bizarre and EA.

ISSUE 60 - APRIL 2006

Five years on from his first cover, and Baverstock is back! Well, with looks like that, can you blame us? Also, Sony got serious about digital distribution as its PS3 plans solidify, and we caught up with Pandemic shortly after its BioWare alliance. Plus, Brighton!

ISSUE 61 - MAY 2006

Phil Harrison, then still at SCEE, courageously (or is that foolishly?) put himself forward to answer the piercing questions of the *Develop* readership. Our personal favourite: Andrew Eades' "Are there any things that the Xbox does better?" The curt reply: "Some things, yes."

ISSUE 62 - JUNE 2006

The first human female to grace the cover in over five years – who says that development is largely a bloke's game? – Fiona Sperry told us all about her plans as the new GM and VP of UK studios at EA, possibly the most acronym-tastic job title ever. Plus: in-game advertising.

ISSUE 63 - JULY 2006

We travelled across galaxies far, far away to visit Skywalker Ranch to find out all about LucasArts' restructure and it's new relationship with Industrial Light and Magic, plus we looked at what games could learn from Hollywood. Again. As if anyone knows the answer to that question.

ISSUE 64 - AUGUST 2006

Newly minted Development Legend Charles Cecil told us all about going rogue again. Also, we took a look at what went down at the first ever Develop Conference, and caught up with *Space Channel 5* god Tetsuya Mizuguchi to find out what makes him so awesome.

ISSUE 65 - SEPTEMBER 2006

The times, they were a-changin'. London Studio detailed how it was using more freelancers and exploiting its Soho location to source creatives outside the games industry, and Microsoft opened up Xbox 360 development to everyone and their collective dogs.

ISSUE 66 - OCTOBER 2006

No, don't run away – yeah, it was a generic middleware cover, but this was at the (relatively) exciting point where middleware became modular, and interoperability opened the true potential for using off-the-shelf solutions. Honestly, it was good. Promise.

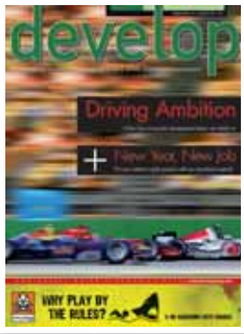
ISSUE 67 - NOVEMBER 2006

Climax had sold off its Brighton-based racing studio to Disney and lopped a large number of people from its LA office. But Karl Jeffries was more positive than ever – Climax now had the resources to do the stuff it'd always wanted, he said. Providing that was 'be quieter'.

ISSUE 68 - DEC '06/JAN '07

Amusingly, this month's cover feature laments how Evolution's close relationship with Sony meant that many people forgot it was independent. Oh well, turns out that really didn't matter. Also, we caught up with David Braben to talk ambitious next-gen projects.

ISSUE 69 - FEBRUARY 2007



Keeping up the racing theme (and, indeed, the Sony theme), we looked at what Sony Liverpool could teach the rest of the dev industry about the PS3's networked future. Consultants were put under the *Develop* microscope, and we found out more about XNA Game Studio.

ISSUE 70 - MARCH 2007

Notice anything different? Yep, we did something different with our hair – and, well, all of the rest of us, come to think of it. Almost three years have since passed and, minor tweaks aside, we think we're still looking pretty fresh. Can't say the same for our editor-in-chief…

ISSUE 71 - APRIL 2007

By now, Media Molecule's super-secret first project had been unveiled, and it quite rightly warranted a cover (one designed by the team themselves, which makes it quite the collector's edition). Staying in Guildford, we also spoke to Molyneux about Lionhead 2.0.

ISSUE 72 - MAY 2007

We go profile crazy in this issue, but with good reason: FreeStyleGames was making its moves to bigger things, Ubisoft Montreal put forward its ambition to be the world's biggest studio, Kuju Brighton became the delightfully weird Zoë Mode, and Relentless were quizzed.

ISSUE 73 - JUNE 2007

We cornered Microsoft Games Studios boss Phil Spencer to talk about the publisher's new focus on European developers, and Blitz gave us a masterclass for Wiimote development while also proclaiming that the 'next development battlefield was staff training.'

ISSUE 74 - JULY 2007

Quantic Dream had just signed up *Heavy Rain* with SCEE, so we asked them what they thought about the beast. This issue also marks the first appearance of Ed Fear, making his debut with a stunning overview of the localisation sector. He is definitely not the one writing these words.

ISSUE 75 - AUGUST 2007

Rockstar Leeds cleaned up at the Develop Awards thanks to their superlative work on *GTA Liberty City Stories*, so we pinned down Gordon Hall to find out how they created one of the few must-have PSP games of the time. Also, Warner Bros. made its first move into games.

ISSUE 76 - SEPTEMBER 2007

Its animation tech line-up was finding huge success within the industry, but that wasn't enough for Oxford-based NaturalMotion – they wanted to get into proper game dev too. We're still looking forward to *BackBreaker*, even if we don't 'get' American football.

ISSUE 77 - OCTOBER 2007

Disney's purchase of Climax Racing raised quite a few eyebrows, some of which we helped to lower with our cover story in issue 67. But we wanted to know how Black Rock had slotted into the entertainment empire, and the answer was 'quite nicely, thanks.'

ISSUE 78 - NOVEMBER 2007

It was perhaps one of the most surprising stories of the time, and Bungie's emancipation from Microsoft is still unprecedented. We quizzed studio head Harold Ryan on what it meant for both parties, and how it was making Bungie become responsible once again.

ISSUE 79 - DEC '07/JAN '08

After a sustained effort of building up its internal development offices, Codemasters also went and opened a new studio in Guildford – so we snuck in to find out what was going on. We also looked at whether multiplatform development was harder in this gen.

ISSUE 80 - FEBRUARY 2008

Ah, the trusty list feature. We picked the 25 people that were changing the face of game development, including Satoru Iwata, Bobby Kotick and, er, Howard Tomlinson. Also, we had a typically try-hard interview with Gamecock. Yeah, what a surprise they went bust.

ISSUE 81 - MARCH 2008

Our recruitment special touched on many separate issues – hiring females into dev roles, the skills shortage, the danger of writing off all games courses, interview techniques and training. We also spoke to Autodesk about getting into the middleware business.

ISSUE 82 - APRIL 2008

Emote told us all about its plans for social gaming (back before Playfish went and conquered Facebook) and new models for developer funding, while we looked at the audio process for *Battlefield Bad Company*. A pretty slow month, looking back.

ISSUE 83 - MAY 2008

EA's Guildford studio was renamed EA Bright Light, and we went undercover (read: were invited) to see its new IP *Zubo* and iterative design process. We also looked at how Dare to be Digital has grown over the years into an international event to be proud of.

ISSUE 84 - JUNE 2008

The Games Up campaign sought to save Britsoft, and board member Rick Gibson talked us through the initiatives. We also looked at the rise of physics-based games, and featured the magnificent OE-CAKE!, which you should all play. Right now.

ISSUE 85 - JULY 2008

It'd been a while since we last looked at the burgeoning Brighton development scene, so you can't blame us for putting it in focus for our Brighton show guide issue. What you can blame us for, though, is that headline: apparently 'Brighton Pier' is rhyming slang.

ISSUE 86 - AUGUST 2008

Rockstar North cleaned up at the Develop Awards, and so it only seemed right to go straight to the top and interview boss Sam Houser – and, amazingly, we did. We also charted Splash Damage's journey from mod team to triple-A developer.

ISSUE 87 - SEPTEMBER 2008

Singapore, India, China and Korea – four rapidly growing game development super-powers. We spoke to LucasArts Singapore, SCEE and Ubisoft Shanghai to find out what makes it such a great place to create games and innovate new business models.

ISSUE 88 - OCTOBER 2008

In this humble writer's opinion, this image is one of our best ever covers. We visited Japanese music game masters Inis to talk about how *Lips* was gunning to make the Xbox 360 more appealing to casual gamers. We also gushed about *Gitaroo Man*. A lot.

ISSUE 89 - NOVEMBER 2008

It wasn't the first time we'd looked at Canada's development scene, but how times had changed since the previous outing: overtaking the UK as the third biggest development country hurt. So we acted all nicey-nicey and profiled the country in a loving feature.

ISSUE 90 - DEC '08/JAN '09

PlayStation Home was mere days away from launch, so we visited London Studio and spoke to the director and lead programmer to find out where the whole idea came from, the logistics of building it, and the revenue generation possibilities for savvy developers.

ISSUE 91 - FEBRUARY 2009

No, wait, *this* is our best cover. We shamelessly tapped into the decade's biggest tidal wave of goodwill, but hey, there was a link – it was our recruitment issue and, er, he'd just assumed a new job. If you think that's bad, you should have seen the Jade Goody cover we cut.

ISSUE 92 - MARCH 2009

From our best ever cover to one of our most talked about. Many people thought we'd deliberately picked a horrible picture of Peter Molyneux for the cover, but we didn't – honest. But given that the interview was very warts-and-all, it was extra appropriate.

ISSUE 93 - APRIL 2009

After releasing *Pure* in 2008 to much critical success, we drove (ho-ho!) our way down to Black Rock to find out all about its new IP, Hollywood racer *Split/Second*. Blitz also told us about how it had become a middleware vendor after being so against it in the past.

ISSUE 94 - MAY 2009

The results of the first Develop Global Quality of Life Survey were in, and they proved just what everyone suspected: game dev staff were overworked and underpaid. Entirely separate, honest, was London Studio's look back at the history and progress of *SingStar*.

ISSUE 95 - JUNE 2009

Bring up cloud gaming to developers and you're guaranteed to get a frosty response, so we cornered the bigwigs at OnLive to find out what it really means for developers (and if it's feasible at all). Telltale, meanwhile, told us how it's managed to sustain the episodic model.

ISSUE 96 - JULY 2009

Sony's platforms had been somewhat slighted by developers of late, so its answer was simple: revitalise the PSP with a new model and an easier approval pipeline. We spoke to the guys involved at SCEE, plus the indie developers looking to make their mark with Minis.

ISSUE 97 - AUGUST 2009

Media Molecule cleaned up at the Develop Awards (as did everyone who attended, looking at the pictures). Meanwhile, we spoke to Grand Prix award winners Codemasters about its internal and external dev efforts, and profiled Scotland's developers once again.

ISSUE 98 - SEPTEMBER 2009

Goodness gracious, two women on the cover within one year? Yep, and with good reason: Channel 4 was turning to games in order to fulfil its educational remit, and employing the services of indie developers to do so. We also had an(other) outsourcing spotlight.

ISSUE 99 - OCTOBER 2009

Easily one of the biggest development teams in the world, the entire *Assassin's Creed II* crew donned our cover as we quizzed them about the logistical nightmares of managing all those people. In stark contrast, we also spoke to Frontier about its 20-person *LostWinds* team.

ISSUE 100 - NOVEMBER 2009

This very issue you have in your hands, right now. If you want to know what's inside it, look at the contents page – I'm not your mother. Here's to the next 100, which we'll probably all read on Kindles or something. I pity the sucker who has to write that round-up.

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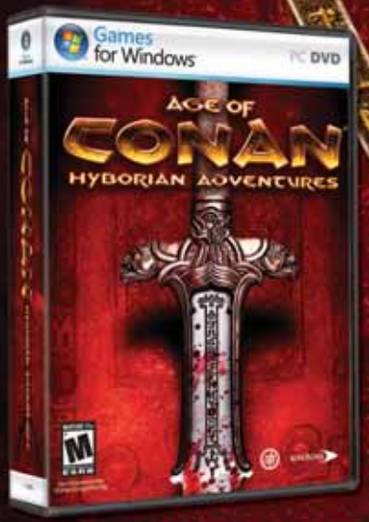

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The Discovered Country

The one territory to have seen the biggest games industry growth in Develop's 100-issue history is undoubtedly Canada. **Will Freeman** profiles the major players in the region's booming games development scene…

Québec

Famous for its French-speaking populace, the large Canadian province of Québec is located in the east of the territory adjacent to the vast expanse that is the Hudson Bay.

In a country renowned for recognising and supporting the games industry it hosts, Québec stands out as perhaps the most forward thinking province, and as a result has become home to numerous studios, publishers and tech companies.

Combining the roles of a financial institution and economic development agency, Investissement Québec is one of the key organisations that assists those running or establishing a games company in the area. As well as promoting Québec as a prime location for investment, the body prospects foreign investment, and offers support services to international subsidiaries in the state.

Luc Carignan, director of Investissement Québec's London office, explains how the body provides such a service: "Since it was created in 1998, Investissement Québec has played a leading role in the economic development of Québec by supporting investment projects that total more close to $50 billion and have led to the creation of some 170,000 jobs.

"One of the main goals is to attract foreign video game companies in Québec. To do so, it provides all the information on comparative operation cost evaluation, how to built strategic alliances with local and international partners and find a location that suits the companies' needs."

And then, of course, there's the tax benefits. The Québec government's refundable tax credit for the production of multimedia titles means companies can substantially lower their production costs. Depending on the type of titles created, assistance can reach up to 37.5 per cent of labour costs.

> ***"With a talented and creative workforce, low operating costs and generous state support, Québec is a world leader in games and attracts the best players."***

"With a talented and creative workforce, low operating costs and generous state support, Québec is a world-leader in the gaming industry and attracts the best players," asserts Carignan. "Leading developers, world-class software publishers and innovative studios all play a central role by creating a dynamic gaming environment."

It's hard to refute Carignan's claims, with companies like EA, Ubisoft, Eidos and Activision's Beenox thriving in the territory, alongside a huge range of smaller studios and firms like Autodesk hailing from Québec. With a 560 per cent rise in the number of people working in the region, things are clearly going very well.

But what makes Québec such a great place to make games? "All video game companies benefit from the fact that operating expenses are extremely competitive and they are eligible for generous tax credits," suggests Carignan.

"In Québec there is a talented and creative workforce. Leading developers, world-class software publishers and innovative studios all play a central role by creating a dynamic gaming environment. Also, the industry can count upon the presence of 32 professional training colleges, 34 private technical colleges and seven universities offering multimedia programs that promote creativity that send more than 4,000 computer science and multimedia-related programs graduates on the labour market every year."

www.investquebec.com/en/

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Number of staff: 2,000
Year founded: 1997
Previous projects: *Assassin's Creed, Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six, Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell, Far Cry, Prince of Persia, Shaun White, Avatar: The Game*
www.ubi.com

UBISIOFT MONTREAL IS effectively the daddy of all games studios – not just in Canada, but globally, given its huge size and stature.

One of the largest production houses in the world, it is similarly famous for some of the publisher's biggest hits – including the likes of *Splinter Cell*, *Prince of Persia* and *Assassin's Creed*.

Develop spoke to CEO Yannis Mallat, who since 2006 has overseen the team's huge expansion – plus Ubisoft's growth into other Canadian territories, and its many collaborations with educators in the region – to find out more…

What would you say are Ubisoft Montreal's biggest milestone achievements?
That is a tough question.

There have been a few milestone achievements and there will be many more to come we believe.

Looking back, we can't answer this without mentioning the release of the first *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell*. Definitely, this was the beginning of it all, and not only for us in the studio but also, for the gaming industry in Montreal.

This game generated a lot of attention and it was as if all the eyes of the industry had suddenly turned to Montreal and realised the potential and the talent that was here.

Obviously, this release was followed by *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time*, the *Rainbow Six*es, the *Far Cry*s and the first *Assassin's Creed*.

Finally, we also believe that we are about to reach another milestone achievement with the release this fall of *Assassin's Creed II*, *Avatar : The Game*, *Shaun White World Stage* and the *Assassin's Creed Lineage* films.

What makes Canada a great place to develop games?
Canada is a great country, period. It's a great business end creative environment to work in. There are a lot factors combined that have had an impact on our industry's growth. If the Provincial Governments have been extremely dedicated in investing to develop this industry in Quebec and in Ontario, it's probably the proximity of the US west coast that has been a key-factor in Vancouver's key development.

The strength of the university and college network has also played a huge role in the development of the Canadian video game industry. Finally, there must be something in the snow or the water that makes Canadians very creative!

What about your studio makes it a great place to work?
Globally, Ubisoft is really dedicated in creating working atmosphere that are positive. It might sound like a stereotype, but happy employees are more creative. And that's what we are trying to build in all of our studios.

Specifically for Montreal, we believe our main strengths reside in the projects that we are developing. Working on triple-A franchises like *Assassin's Creed*, *Prince of Persia*, *Rainbow Six*, *Splinter Cell*, *Far Cry*, and *Shaun White* is extremely stimulating we believe.
On top of that you have to add all of the benefits that range from fresh fruits to bagels, the gym, the medical clinic, child day care and so on.

FUNCOM

Number of staff: Approx. 300 worldwide
Year founded: 1993
Locations: Denmark, US, Canada, China, Switzerland
Previous projects: *The Longest Journey, Anarchy Online, Age of Conan*
Current projects: *The Secret World, Conan*
www.funcom.com

ORIGINALLY ESTABLISHED IN Denmark back in 1993 by founders Erik Gloersen, Ian Neil, Andre Backen, Gaute Godager and Olav Mørkrid, Funcom only expand to Canada in September this year.

Perhaps best known for *Anarchy Online* and *Age of Conan*, Funcom's recent history has seen it specialise heavily in online gaming; a trend that its recently-opened office in Montreal is set to continue.

Already things are very busy at the new studio, which joins Funcom's Oslo, US, Chinese and Swiss operations.

"We have a core technology team in place," explains Funcom COO Ole Schreiner, who is charged with heading up the Canadian operation.

"Our chief technology officer is in Montreal and will run his team of core technology engineers delivering core technology to our new titles. We will also have several smaller teams connected to our main production, like production to the new MMO *The Secret World (pictured, left)*. It will consist of designers, some graphic artists, world builders and so on."

Attracted to Canada by what it describes as a 'a fantastic talent pool', Funcom's location in the Quebec province means it is primed to take advantage of some of the country's most generous incentives and tax breaks, but that isn't the only motivator behind the firm's decision to set up shop.

"Canada has embraced game development and it definitely shows," Schreiner says. "The close proximity to one of the largest gaming markets in the world is also a great benefit to us.

"Funcom is a world leading MMO development studio with world class developers in a flexible and young environment. Funcom is one of the most multicultural companies in the world, with staff from over 40 different nations working throughout our offices in Norway, the US, Canada, China and Switzerland.

"We have some of the most talented individuals in the business working here, and during the past 15 years we have established a technology platform that allows us to bring our ideas to life."

Keen to build on the ongoing success of the likes of *Anarchy Online* and *The Longest Journey*, which have arguably made a significant impact on the industry, Funcom is already eagerly looking to the future.

"It's hard to choose your favourite baby," jokes Schreiner when asked to pick Funcom's biggest achievement to date.

"Most recently we launched *Age of Conan* which is an amazing game. It's a huge, overwhelming project that we're very proud of; with over one million games sold, it's been a huge success for us.

"But of course, games such as *Anarchy Online* and *The Longest Journey* are both games that have made a tremendous impact in the industry, and that's something we're very proud of.

"We want to continue pushing the envelope for MMOs," reveals Schreiner when it comes to talk of what work the new Montreal studio will support as it grows in the years to come.

"Right now we're working on our biggest title yet, *The Secret World*, and we're employing everything we learned from our previous games into this one project. We want to create MMOs for the future, through fantastic gameplay and groundbreaking technology."

UBISOFT QUEBEC CITY

Number of staff: 240
Year founded: 2005
Location: Quebec City, Canada
Previous projects: *Combat of Giants: Dragons* (DS), *Combat of Giants: Dinosaurs* (DS), *Rainbow Six Vegas* (PSP), *Surf's Up* (DS, PSP, GBA), *Open Season* (DS, PSP, GBA), *Cranium Kabookii* (Wii), *TMNT* (DS, PSP), *My Stop Smoking Coach with Allen Carr* (DS), *Wordfish* (DS), *Rainbow Six : Critical Hour* (Xbox)
www.ubi.com

UBISOFT QUEBEC CELEBRATES its fifth birthday in 2010. When founded its objective was to grow to 200 in five years – something it managed in just 18 months.

"Over the recent years, we have seen the industry evolving a lot, especially in the greater Quebec City area," explains general manager Nicolas Rioux. "Since 2005, we noticed an important growth of 350 per cent of people working in the video game industry. IT companies, schools, universities and the governments have all the same will to create a world renowned strong and dynamic hub for digital arts and entertainment.

"Canada is a great place to work wherever you come from. It has a high quality of life and a lot of talented people working in art and science. Video game is the perfect combination of both fields. We have a lot of schools and universities, especially in Quebec, teaching video game programming, animation, digital arts, etc."

At first, the studio cut its teeth of licensed and franchise games, such as Surf's Up, Cranium and *Rainbow Six Vegas* PSP – still one of the best-sellers on the handheld and rereleased earlier this year for PSPgo. But it expanded to new IP last year with *Combat of Giants: Dinosaurs*. That title has been a huge success to its target audience of boys aged six to 12.

Rioux adds: "We have multiple teams working on different projects at different stages of development. At the moment, we have around five teams working on the same amount of titles. We also have a team of 30 people developing and supporting a whole game production pipeline used in more than 30 Ubisoft projects all around the world."

Going forward, the studio plans to drive forward Ubisoft's work in new fields as well as established platforms – and says the relatively smaller scale of the studio will help that happen: "We develop all types of games on multiple platforms, not to forget strong Ubisoft brands. We want to go out of traditional paths and explore new avenues.

TRAPDOOR

Number of staff: Xxx
Year founded: 2008
Location: Montreal
Previous projects: G.I. Joyride
Current projects: Young Villain Academy, two more unannounced iPhone titles, original IP for 360 and PS3
www.trapdoorinc.com

DESPITE BEING ONE OF Canada's newer studios, Trapdoor has been quick to make a mark on the country's blooming industry. Set up in 2008 by former Gameloft Montreal studio manger Ken Schachter, the firm has so far specialised in iPhone releases, but with original IP underway for 360 and PC, it is rapidly broadening its creative remit.

"With many large studios setting up shop and developing flagship products in Canada, we've really seen incredible growth – and interest – in developing here," says Schachter. "Our hope is to see more independent talent breakaway and take the plunge."

As a small independent, formed by a team 'tired of working for the man', Trapdoor has also enjoyed the benefit of support from Quebec's incentives for games makers; something smaller studios in other country's may struggle to secure.

"Tax breaks do have a significant impact on our company," admits Schachter. "Thanks to these, we are able to invest greatly on R&D, which is a valuable advantage in our industry."

"Our core focus is on the creation of original IP for digital distribution," explains Schachter.

"In another segment, we have started looking to publish smaller creative independent developers on our target platforms. We believe there are many opportunities in this area. We're also starting to dabble in cross media concepts, involving comic books, toys, and more.

"However our approach to other media is done in the spirit that each of those should be able to stand on its own as a good work. We wouldn't create a comic book specifically as a marketing tool for a certain game; we believe consumers can see through that."

Clearly ambitious, Trapdoor is a close-knit company that works together across its disciplines. Hoping to set itself apart from its rivals as a trendsetter, for Schachter and his team, the future certainly looks bright.

FRIMA

Number of staff: 250
Year founded: 2003
Location: Quebec City
Previous projects: Build-A-Bearville.com, galaxseeds.com, neoshifter.com
Current projects: Ipso.com, *Zombie Tycoon*
www.frimastudio.com

FOUNDED IN 2003 and lead by its CEO and respected Canadian games industry figure Steve Couture, Frima made its name creating high-end Flash games tied in with Hollywood IP.

More recently Frima has enjoyed great success developing technology to support MMOs. Initially securing a contract with Canada's own Corus Entertainment, Couture's team has now established its own children's MMOs, including *Littlest Pet Shop*.

Over its six-year lifespan, Frima has had plenty of opportunity to see Canada's games industry evolve. "A few years ago, there was simply no video game industry at all," reveals Couture. "Especially in the province of Quebec. In the last few years, we saw international companies establishing offices in several Canadian cities. Those offices really helped to create an actual industry here. Now, we need to be able to create and produce more 100 per cent Canadian games that will be distributed all around the world and would bring back revenues in our provinces.

Being positioned in Quebec of course means Frima can alsoenjoy the benefits of the region's tax breaks.

Says Couture: "This program has had a significant impact on our company's development and on the industry at large. Apart from Quebec's expertise, creativity and technological expertise, this program explains why so many major video game companies that have decided to establish themselves here."

Frima is a also a studio with a design philosophy typical of the creative mindset of its home province, and of course, it has a French motto.

"We would say 'Garder la tête froide' which literally refers to keep the head cold. It means to stay realistic and 'cartesien' (logical), even with success, and keep ideas fresh. We are a massively creative team that develops massively creative games."

Frima is focusing on original games for the forseeable future: in 2010, the company also has plans to become more involved in 3D animation and special effects.

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Services

Meet two companies which have been instrumental in supporting the growth of the Canadian industry…

DAVIS

Number of staff: 220 laywers, approximately 550 total staff
Year founded: 1892
Location: Various offices around the world, including Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Montréal, Toronto, Tokyo
www.davis.ca

LEGAL EXPERTS DAVIS may be the oldest Canadian firm in this guide – it was founded in the 19th Century – but that doesn't stop it being a thoroughly modern business serving games developers around the world.

It was the first national law firm in Canada (and one of the few in the world) to create a dedicated video game law department, comprised of a group of lawyers from across the firm: lawyers with expertise in taxation, employment, immigration, commercial law, litigation and other areas of expertise required by video game companies.

And as a spectator watching the Canadian games sector grow, Davis has exceptional knowledge of the industry's diverse pressures.

"The rapid growth of the games scene in Canada has attracted talent from around the world," says Craig Natsuhara, one of Davis' immigration lawyers. "Gaming companies typically relied more and more on foreign workers to fill existing labour shortages in the high tech sector.

"However, from an immigration law perspective, the downturn in the economy resulted in the Canadian governmental agencies responsible for administering immigration-related programs to act swiftly to implement policy changes intended to slow the recruitment of temporary foreign workers."

As an expert in these fields, Davis is ideally placed to help the industry understand proposed immigration law changes that were announced in October – and urging businesses in the region to work smartly: "We will need to help gaming companies implement solutions to overcome these limitations."

ENZYME LABS

Year founded: 2002
Location: Ste-Adele, Quebec and Montreal , Quebec (plus Madrid and Tokyo)
Previous projects: Tested over 200 titles in 2008 alone
www.enzymelabs.com

QA & LOCALISATION SPECIALIST

Enzyme was founded in 2002 by Yan Cyr and Emmanuel Viau.

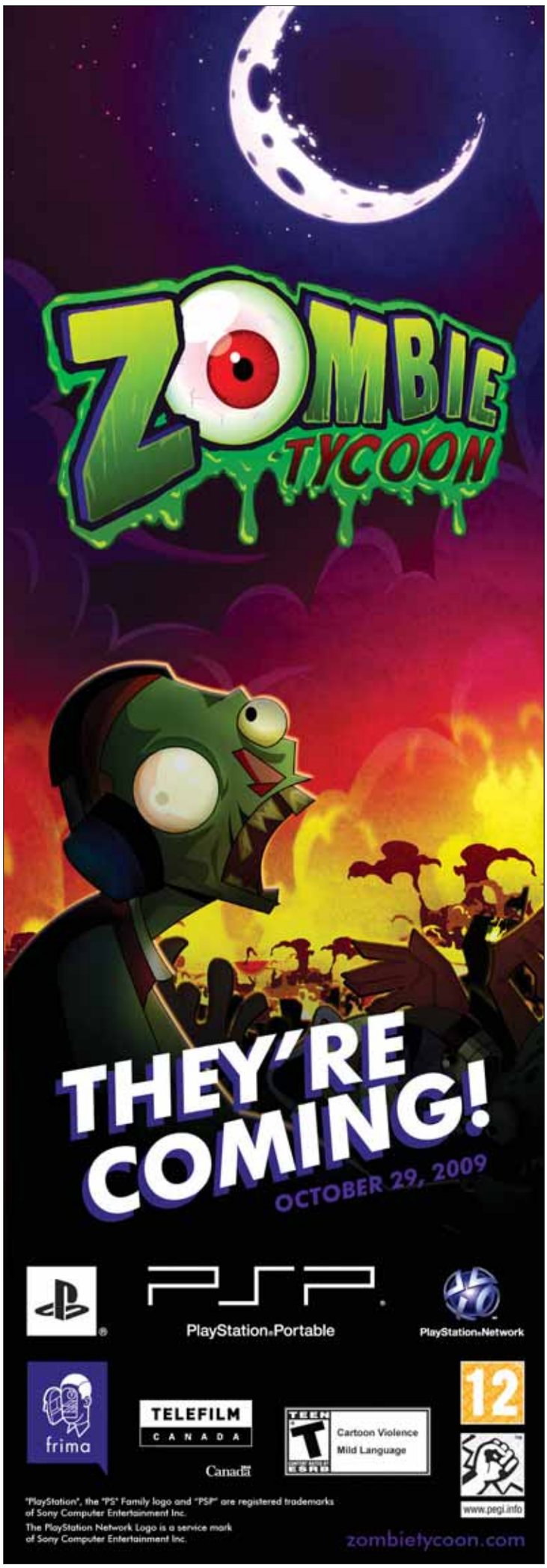
The firm has grown with impressive speed. By 2005 100 were employed at the firm, and by the summer of 2008 Enzyme boasted a headcount of over 450, having expanded to Montreal, Madrid and Tokyo.

Confident that Canada provides a stable talent pool to pull from and support, Enzyme handles several projects catering for compatibility, functionality, pre-certification and linguistic testing in over 15 languages. It's a mammoth undertaking, and one that's been made a little easier by Canadian authorities' support.

"The reality is that the governments support the industry and see the tremendous future growth potential it has and the quality jobs it creates now and will in the future. In any country, any type of support helps the development and growth of an industry," states Cyr.

Yet it is Enzyme's own effort that underpins its success, and that in part is thanks to a strong culture of customer service. "Our primary business objective is to deliver quality services to our customers at all costs, as we have built our reputation on this foundation and it has contributed to us achieving one of the highest levels of customer satisfaction in the industry.

"Our culture is about having fun. Unlike many companies in the industry, Enzyme Labs prides itself on the large in-house staff that we maintain throughout the year. We value our employees and believe that keeping them happy is the best way to ensure delivering quality to our customers."



Technology

Profiling two of the technology companies that have thrived thanks to Canadian talent…

AUTODESK

Number of staff: Not publicly disclosed
Year founded: 1982 (since 1999 in Montreal, since 2006 in Toronto)
Location: Autodesk Media & Entertainment HQ in Montreal, development office in Toronto.
Best known for: Maya, 3ds Max, Softimage, MotionBuilder, Mudbox, Kynapse, HumanIK
www.autodesk.com

AUTODESK IS THE sort of company that needs very little introduction to even those tangental to the games development industry.

Ever since its games debut with the then-monikered 3D Studio Max, the company has continued to expand its influence in the games market, not just with its ubiquitious self-made technology, but also the purchase of Alias (and therefore its popular Maya package) in 2006 and similar acquisition of Softimage in 2008.

ART OF THE MATTER

But art packages are just part of how Autodesk wants to be known in the games industry: not just as a tools company, but as an end-to-end solutions provider dedicated to believable character performances. It acquired AI middleware developer Kynogon in 2008 and has also self-developed the runtime animation solution HumanIK.

Although Autodesk's headquarters are in California, the nucleus of the Media & Entertainment team, which includes games, is nestled within the heart of Montreal's bustling game development scene. For a company that wants to work with developers, there's no better location.

"There are so many world-class projects within a very small area," says Leonard Teo, games product marketing manager at Autodesk. "You've got Autodesk in the old port developing 3ds Max, Softimage, MotionBuilder, Kynapse, HumanIK and more. A walk up the road, you have EA developing *Army of Two*. A few blocks further, you have Eidos working on *Thief 4* and *Deus Ex 3*.

"A walk up the hill, you have Ubisoft creating blockbuster titles such as *Assassin's Creed II* and *Avatar: The Game*. These are just some high profile examples and there are more. The sheer number of world-class projects within a relatively small radius in Montreal is amazing."

And Teo thinks that there are far more reasons to want to be in Canada beyond tax breaks.

"I think that in general, Canada is positioned well for tech companies because people actually want to live and work in Canada, and the business and legal environment is conducive for companies.

"One thing that young, career-minded people need to consider is the standard and cost of living – Canada is amazing for that. You can afford to have a great quality of life, healthcare, education, all while working on some amazing, world-class projects."

And that's what Autodesk is continuing to do also, with more products in the pipeline, explains Teo.

"We'll keep delivering powerful art tools. We're also building out our middleware solutions – the focus is on character-centric middleware. We want to make it easier to create amazing, interactive character performances. Our vision is for a unified workflow where art tools work harmoniously with run-time technology."

AUDIOKINETIC

Number of staff: 21
Year founded: 2000
Location: Montreal, Quebec
Previous projects: Wwise, Wwise Motion, SoundSeed Impact
www.audiokinetic.com

audiokinetic

AUDIOKINETIC IS WELL known to a lot of developers for its Wwise audio engine, which has been used in over 150 games to this date.

But not only has it produced a well-rounded real-time engine, the company's focus on the editing environment has been so well received that it left its main competitor, FMOD, scrambling to catch up. The focus on decoupling the work of the audio designer and the audio programmer tapped into a real desire within the industry.

The company was founded in 2000 by a group of veterans in the music, film and gaming industries, who realised that if games were to feature better audio they needed more professional tools.

It released Wwise in 2006, after which Microsoft Game Studios quickly signed up for a long-standing licence agreement – and the rest is history. In more recent times, it's continued to innovate, releasing the cutting-edge SoundSeed Impact – the first of a long line of planned SoundSeed titles – which brings generative audio into real-time situations, ensuring that one-shot sounds never appear the same.

But all of this might not have been possible in such a short time without the support that Quebec provides for games-related companies.

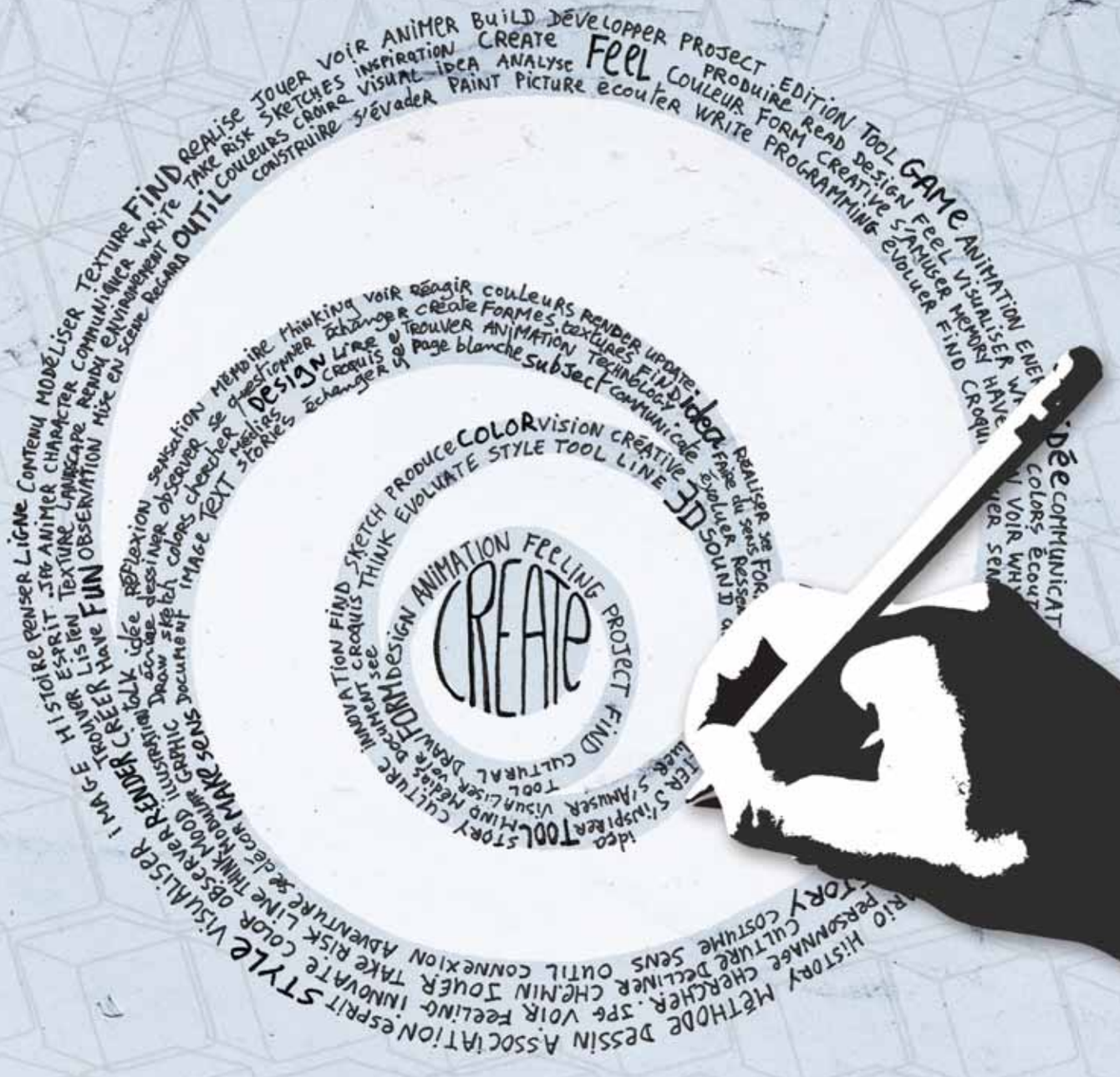
"The tax credits really helped at the beginning," says Karine Legeron, marketing and communications manager at Audiokinetic. "I think that, if they hadn't been available, we probably would have started with a smaller team. We receive tax credits on the research and development accomplished by our development team. Being based in Montreal, we benefit from both the federal and the provincial tax credit programs, which certainly helps."

The company also benefits greatly from the impressive educational establishments in the region and their efforts towards inclusive games courses.

"In Montreal alone, there are four major universities and several specialised schools teaching classes related to video game development, which is really useful for a growing technology company. As a company providing solutions for game developers, we also benefit from the presence of other middleware companies like Autodesk, Quazal, and Softimage."

And while the company is hard at work on even bigger and better things – more audio processing, more third-party integrations, says Legeron – it's not ashamed to look back at its accomplishments.

"We had this vision over eight years ago, and having more than 150 games adopt Wwise in the three years since its launch is quite an achievement. It was a fantasy back then, and people thought we were dreamers, but now we can see that the game development community is ready for it!"



UBISOFT

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Ontario

Positioned in east-central Canada below the Hudson Bay, Ontario is Canada's most populated province, and home to over 2,000 people employed in the video games industry.

Publisher Ubisoft now has presence in the region, and is joined numerous studios including Bedlam Games, Artech Studios, Magmic Games, Silicon Knights, Digital Extremes and March Entertainment.

Home to Canadian metropolis Toronto, Ontario is currently spearheading a drive to establish itself as one of northern America's most significant games industry hubs, thanks to the efforts of government bodies like the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and fellow groups such as the Ontario Media Development Corporation.

Established for several decades, Ontario's Ministry of Economic Development and Trade began to look seriously at the local game development community over two years ago.

"We recognised that if we could talk to the industry directly we'd get a very good clue as to what we'd need to do to help them grow," reveals the Minister of economic development and trade Sandra Pupatello. "And that's exactly what happened. We knew that after we'd met them we'd have a game plan that would create and environment around incentives that at least rival the other jurisdictions."

Other territories across Canada offer infamously generous incentives and tax benefits, and Ontario's Ministry's Digital Media tax credits are no exception. But in order to compete, it's become important to deliver a more rounded support structure.

That meant a focus on nurturing skills and attracting publishers that would both feed from and magnetise local talent. Ubisoft was the first major publisher to establish a presence in Ontario as a result,

> ***"At some point governments are going to say 'Stop now'. So Ontario has to make sure it has alternative incentives in place to attract games developers."***

and subsequently the area has become more attractive to returning graduates and the developers that employ them.

"We knew that Ubisoft establishing a significant footprint in Ontario would in itself would help tell the story of what's available," enthuses Pupatello. "Why would Ubisoft come unless they knew that they were going to get absolutely the best talent? That's what they're finding here."

As Pupatello suggests, competition between jurisdictions trying to offer the best tax breaks 'can be a never-ending run'.

"At some point, governments are going to say: 'Ok. Stop now.' That's why we have to consider that we have other alternatives for being the kind of jurisdiction people want to be in." says Pupatello. "When we talked to people in the information communication technology sector they said their number one reason for being in any jurisdiction is talent."

That means one thing: investments in education. One fund Ontario offers is the Video Game Prototype Initiative, which can offer $500,000 to help developers create market ready games. Furthermore, companies who work with an Ontario university can also be eligible for another 20 per cent of a refundable tax credit on production expenses. It's programmes like these that keep the region's post-secondary education system close to its industry.

"I want people to know that we've got a relentless pursuit ongoing, to continue to grow this industry," concludes Pupatello.

"We've got the best corporate tax structure of any jurisdiction in North America. Companies who truly want to be global need a footprint in North America and we think Ontario is best launch pad for that."

BEDLAM GAMES

Number of staff: 55 full-time plus approximately 10 contractors
Year founded: 2006
Location: Toronto, Ontario
Current projects: Scratch: The Ultimate DJ
Key Staff: Donald Henderson (studio GM); Trevor Fencott (CEO); Jon Paul Schelter (technical director); Zandro Chan (creative director)
www.bedlamgames.com

ESTABLISHED BY A group of former Rockstar Toronto employees and boutique studio Groove Media in 2005, Bedlam Games is staffed by a team of veterans that have worked at a variety of Canadian studios, including those owned by Ubisoft and EA.

Although the team waited until 2007 to become a separate legal entity from Groove in 2007, the team has seen first hand Ontario's expansion as a major player in the Canadian games industry.

"Until Ubisoft's recent announcement that they were coming to Toronto, Bedlam was one of the only triple-A console studios to arrive in Toronto over the past several years," explains general manager Donald Henderson.

"We've always seen Toronto as a huge opportunity for growth in the game development industry – it is a fantastic city to live in, it has well developed entertainment industry infrastructure, its universities and colleges are a major source of programming and art talent, and there are many expatriate Torontonians who are interested in returning to the right opportunity."

Positioned as it is in Ontario, Bedlam has, like many Canadian Studios, been able to take advantage of tax credits and government support to help it remain competitive and create jobs to offset the losses in the region's manufacturing sector.

"When Ubisoft announced that they were coming to Toronto, they announced that the government had committed $263 million to them over 10 years, so that's a significant investment and it shows that the government is in this for the long haul, which is great for all developers in Ontario," explains Bedlam chief executive officer Trevor Fencott.

And it's not only traditional tax benefits that have helped Bedlam.

"In general, the different programs are well run and effective at meeting their objectives," adds Fencott. "For example, the Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC), which runs one of the most important tax credits has been fantastic to work with."

Bedlam currently has its workforce split across several projects, with most staff dedicated to a single project. However, it aims to evolve into a '2.5 team' studio with 100 personnel within the next two years. Focused intently on project management realised through a production methodology, Bedlam is also keen to emphasise its dedication to a fulfilled workforce.

"We pride ourselves on open communication," insists technical director Jon Paul Schelter. "People treat each other with respect. The goal is to make great games together. Right now, we have our team divided between projects with most people dedicated to one project, although there are some individuals such as tools developers who support the entire studio. One thing that we take very seriously – and something we think distinguishes us from some studios – is our focus on project management. Our production department uses PMI methodology and the team is trained in this approach."

"I am really proud that we have stayed true to our vision of the type of company that we wanted to build, even when we went through difficult times and uncertainty – for example, when we were still a part of Groove. We've had very low turnover in the company, which shows me that people are really committed to the studio," concludes creative director Zandro Chan.

UBISOFT TORONTO

Year founded: 2009
www.ubi.com

UBISOFT'S TORONTO BASE is one of the publisher's newest studios, and was formerly unveiled earlier this year by the French firm and the Ontario government.

Currently, the plan is to open the new studio within the next few months.

The new base in the bustling Canadian city will create 800 new jobs within the Ontario province over the next ten years and the local government is investing CA$263 million in the business. Ubisoft plans to likewise significantly invest in the outfit, having earmarked a fund of over half a billion Canadian dollars.

"The decision for Ubisoft to open a studio in Toronto was based on a few different factors," explains Ubisoft Montreal CEO Yannis Mallat who will oversee the studio, which is to be run on a day to day basis by *Assassin's Creed* producer Jade Raymond.

"First of all, as it was the case in Montreal and Quebec, the government of the Province of Ontario was dedicated to develop the industry in the Toronto area. They have been central in the whole process with their willingness and proactivity. But it's not all.

"Toronto also has some key universities and colleges that have been training video game experts over the last few years. We are convinced that Toronto represents a very strong potential of growth and to contribute to the Group's global growth."

So what will mark the two apart?

"Well, since the studio isn't still open yet, it's a bit early to answer the question, but the idea here is that the Ubisoft studios across the world are mostly built on the same model and operate similarly," says Mallat. "So the goal is not to work differently but mostly to contribute to the Group's global objectives, the same way that Montreal, Quebec and Vancouver are already doing."

Toronto is relatively nascent as a games development city, and pales into comparison to the likes of Montreal – but it has plenty of potential, says Mallatt. He's keen to make it clear that by entering an established region – which already hosts studios run by Rockstar, Silicon Knights and many others – it isn't necessarily competing. Instead there is real potential for Ubisoft to help tempt former Ontario residents back into the region.

"We are convinced that there is already some very strong talent in Toronto. We also know that there are a lot of Ontarians that have decided to fly away and to work across the globe but a lot of them are interested in coming back to work closer to ther friends and family. So that's one aspect.

"Like everywhere, we are developing some recruiting tactics and strategies. One that is dedicated to the Toronto studio is the Employee No.1 campaign on Facebook and Twitter which consists of documenting the creation of the studio and to give an unprecedented access to this phase that is quite unknown to the people out there."

Likewise, Ubisoft will be flexing its muscle in the education space as it expands the Toronto team – it has already forged great ties with educators in Quebec, and is eyeing similar opportunities in Ontario.

"The goal is to develop strong relationships with universities and colleges to ensure that the programs are well adapted to the needs of the industry. We have the practical experience, they have the skills to teach. It's a good match."

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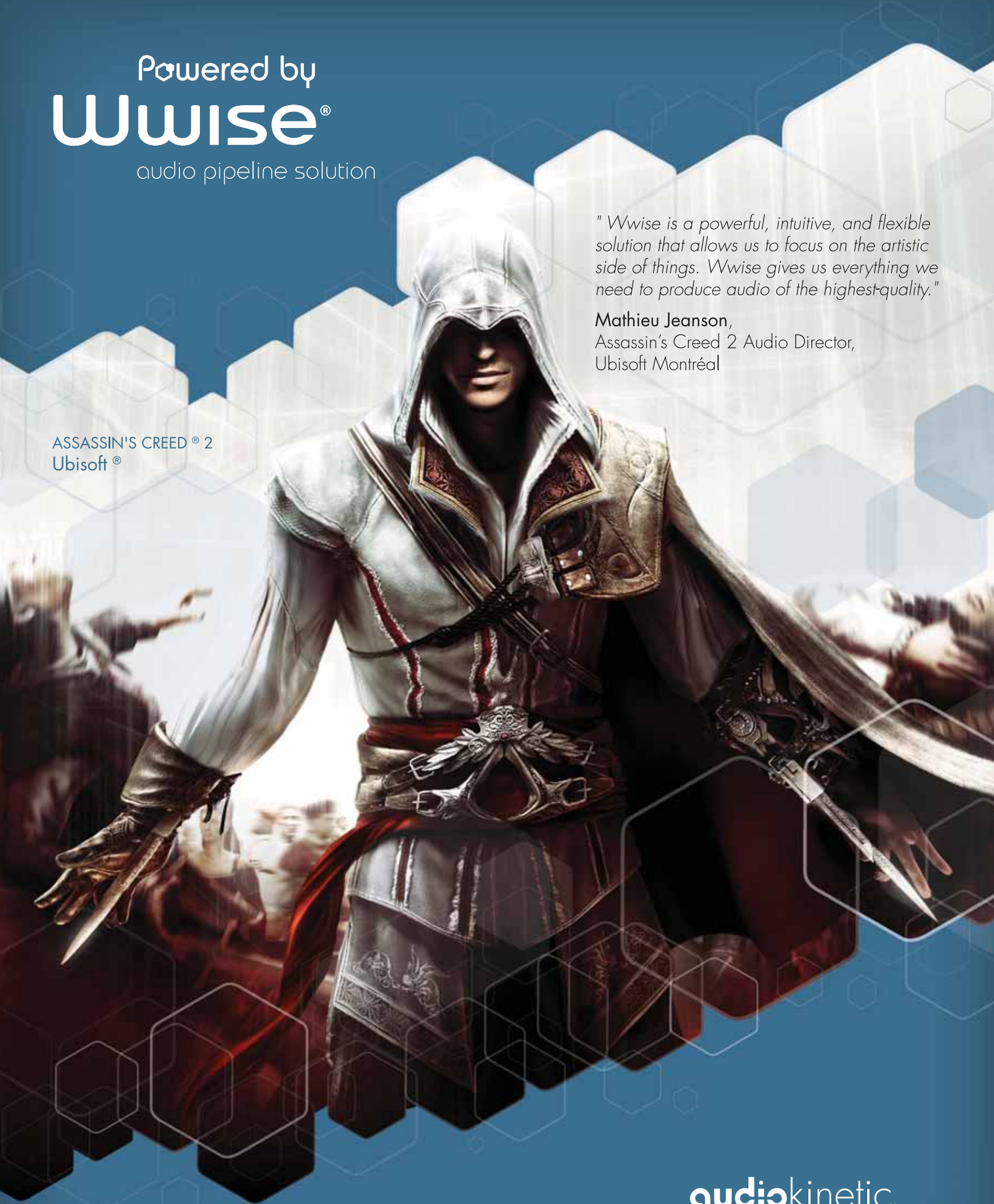

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Vancouver

Of course, you can't talk about games development in Canada without acknowledging the growth of the country's West Coast scene.

While the city of Vancouver and province British Columbia is best known for housing one of the other largest single-site studios in the world – the big EA Canada campus – it is also home to THQ's Relic, Disney's Propaganda, casual firm Big Fish's Canadian studio, a Rockstar studio and one or two independents, such as Smoking Gun Interactive.

Below we look at one of the more recent examples of how this area is still growing (by attracting expansion-hungry Ubisoft) despite suggestions the region has become saturated with studios…

UBISOFT VANCOUVER

Number of staff: 115
Year founded: 2006
Location: Yaletown, Vancouver, British Columbia
Current project: *Academy of Champions: Soccer*
www.ubi.com

LIKE UBISOFT TORONTO (*see page 46*) the publisher's Vancouver studio is a relatively new team which joined this year – but was added to the French firm's family through acquisition rather expansion.

Established as Action Pants in 2006, Ubisoft signalled its interest in the studio early on, signing the team's first publishing deal. The firm was attracted by the mandate to build innovative IP from a proprietary game engine on a boutique-style studio format.

Three years later and Ubisoft stepped up to fully acquire the studio in in February this year – at the same time, the studio announced its debut title, *Academy of Champions: Soccer*, which launches this month.

"Ubisoft's presence in Canada represents the type of growth that can be expected in such a young industry and highlights the quality of talent that is based in Canada – capable of supporting four studios," explains MD Bertrand Helias.

"Being part of what is known as the West coast creative corridor, Vancouver enjoyed double-digit growth in this industry, earlier in the decade, well above the global rate of growth – only now, as other jurisdictions have added growth incentives to attract business, creating a competitive-disadvantage in BC, have we seen the growth here stop and start to climb significantly in Eastern Canada."

That doesn't mean slow down for the Canadian games industry overall, Helias adds.

"Canada has always been well-positioned to drive digital innovation – Canadians are considered the Type As of North America. Given that 80 per cent of Canadians live in an urban centre, access to all things digital has made Canadians very tech-savvy and many new technological advances are tested in Canada first such as interac bank machines, eBay and so on. This adaptable, early adopter attitude creates an environment where innovation is demanded and this in turn, draws out endless creativity and initiative. In the world of easily-jaded gamers, Ubisoft has recognised the insatiable appetite Canadians have for the next amazing innovation so it is no surprise that Ubisoft is tapping into Canadian talent."

Ubisoft Vancouver's team pride themselves on the motto 'It's About the People You Work With' – so in-house training is as widely available as the raft of extra-curricular activities and out-of-hours clubs that are open for non-games interests, including an external art space that allows team members to explore their diverse artistic skills and once a year can participate in a city-wide Art Crawl to interact with the general public.

"As a team, we know it is easier to learn in an environment of trust and support while the fun factor adds to the team spirit which resonates in the product being created," says Bertrand Helias.

All of this excitement and energy has fed back into debut game *Academy of Champions*, he says.

"It is a sports title created exclusively for the Wii and supports Nintendo's latest peripheral, Wii Motion Plus but it is the attention to detail within the gameplay and environments – as well as the pleasure of watching the media and the world's best-known soccer legend, Pele, thoroughly enjoy playing the game – that really makes all the efforts put into an innovative new game, well worth it."

Nova Scotia

Although it is one of the smaller provinces in terms of land mass in Canada, Nova Scotia is a booming state populated by a number of the country's leading developers.

And Nova Scotia Business Inc., or NSBI – the southeastern peninsula province's private sector-led business development agency – has witness first-hand the area's growth as a force for games development.

Conceived to assist local business and attract international companies to the region, the NSBI offers a range of services, including investment attraction, trade development, business advice, business financing and venture capital.

Describing itself as an 'arms-length', private sector led agency, NSBI works with the Trade Commissioners Service, and offers payroll rebates to companies looking to locate in Nova Scotia.

Meanwhile, the Government of Nova Scotia has created a Digital Media Tax Credit of 25 per cent of total production costs, with a regional bonus of another five per cent for non-metro areas.

"We believe the tax credits have helped to develop Canada into a world power in game development," explains Jayson Hilchie, director of information technology and interactive media, investment attraction. "Obviously the availability of talented labour and competitive business costs play into any equation, but the credits have set us apart in terms of government support to this industry."

NSBI also employs a labour strategist to help the area's companies with headhunting and securing talent. The specialist devises strategies to help hit employment targets, and in a wider context, the NSBI works with firms to help with work permit questions and labour market opinions.

> ***"Tax credits have helped to develop Canada into a world power in games. They have set us apart in terms of government support to this industry."***

"Ubisoft is beginning to expand outside of Quebec with its recent announcement of 800 new jobs in Toronto," says Hilchie.

"Other companies are going to begin to look to other Canadian provinces, like Nova Scotia, for their labour needs as Quebec becomes more competitive. We have also seen new independent companies springing up and releasing successful games.

"Nova Scotia, in particular, ranked one of the most cost-competitive locations in Canada to operate a gaming studio. We are home to 11 universities and 13 community college campuses, along with a number of private post-secondary institutions with a focus on digital arts.

"Situated half way between western Europe and the western US, our time zone allows you to do business with both sides of the Atlantic and the west coast of the US on the same work day," he adds.

"Plus, Nova Scotia offers balance. This beautiful province is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, offers short commute times, and a quality of life that is second to none. In turn, smart, creative people thrive here – a bonus for game studios."

NSBI has pledged a commitment to continue to nurture the cohesive cooperation between academia, industry and government, with an aim to enhance the territory's business environment. With a future-proofed approach to its methods in achieving such aims, it looks like Nova Scotia should be attracting new companies for a good while yet.

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HUMINAH HUMINAH

Number of staff: 35 artists
Year founded: Started video game production in 2007
Location: Halifax, Novia Scotia
Previous projects: *FaceOFF*, *Guitar Hero 5*, *Marvel Ultimate Alliance*, *James Bond Quantum Solace, Wisegals*, *Beefarm*, Flash projects for the NFL, Nickelodeon, MTV and numerous others
www.huminahuminah.com

HUMINAH HUMINAH STARTED working in film production in 2005 and moved to game development just two years later, initially creating simple Flash games.

"Now we have two companies, Huminah Huminah Animation, and Huminah Huminah Interactive; Both profitable businesses that produce original content, and production services," says executive producer Adam Mimnagh. "HHI was able to really step into the next stage of providing game production services for clients such as Disney Online, Nickelodeon, and Warner Brothers because of NSBI's ability and interest in developing the interactive gaming sector within this province.

"They sent a young – but experienced – Nova Scotia business such as ours abroad to be able to sit in front of big studio buyers and allowed us face time to sell our advanced skillsets and affordable abilities."

Mimnagh is happy to admit that Quebec, which he has seen lure away several companies in previous years, has very attractive incentives, but more recently things have changed, and Nova Scotia has risen to be an impressive force in attracting and maintaining an interactive industry.

"There were very attractive incentives to setup shop there. Quebec was known to the world as a place where behemoth interactive gaming companies such as Ubisoft or Eido's opened up and it is a direct result of their government backing," explains Mimnagh. "Next came Ontario and Nova Scotia's incentives, with NSBI lobbying to create a 25 per cent digital media tax credit."

Now the Nova Scotia tax credit is a significant financial incentive to allow companies such as Activision, or The NFL to want to continue working with Huminah Huminah. Looking forward the studio hopes to continue to focus on combining the IP of its film clients with its own game development, while expanding its portfolio of internally-created casual gaming IP. There's even plans to partner with other local developers under one roof, showcasing how ambitious this multitalented company is.

SILVERBACK GAMES

Number of staff: Up to 14
Year founded: 2005
Location: Halifax, Nova Scotia
Previous projects: *Ben and Kranky*, *Mr. Jones Graveyard Shift*
Current projects: *The Arc*
www.silverbackgames.com

BUSINESS PARTNERS AND husband and wife team Willie Stevenson and Colleen Shannahan left the TV industry in 2005 to set up Silverback Games. Employing six staff at the time, they spent two-and-a-half years 'learning the tricks' and establishing their children's game series, Ben and Kranky.

Now, having established its first IP, Silverback is now expanding its portfolio.

"We needed to refill our empty coffers and find a way of generating a revenue stream as we positioned *Ben and Kranky* properly, so we decided to enter the world of casual games," says Stevenson. "We created a prototype of a time management game *Mr. Jones Graveyard Shift* and signed with a distributor at GDC.

"We reworked this title and launched it on 20-plus portals in August of 2009. It made it to top-five on major portals and number 15 overall on Big Fish."

The kind of success Silverback is enjoying is part of the reason that several young companies in Nova Scotia region are trying to migrate from a the local ailing TV industry into games.

"They are very different industries," remarks Stevenson. "Although the firms that survive the initial growing pains will find out that the industry has a lot to offer and may be a lot more able to weather the storms of recession better than most sectors, it's also a borderless industry and our governments are really making an effort to support the industry."

Describing tax breaks in the region as 'quite dramatic', Stevenson is confident Silverback can benefit from the input of Canada's financial incentives for the games industry, especially with regard to labour costs, which is where the studio's money is generally spent.

Silverback plans to deliver a new episode of *Ben and Kranky* every three months. For now, though, the studio, is weathering the financial storm, even if that means Stevenson and Shannahan skip their own pay-packets to make sure that the staff get paid.

XONA

Number of staff: 2
Year founded: 2008
Location: Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
Current projects: Xbox Live Indie title Duality ZF
www.xona.com

PROUDLY INDEPENDENT, Xona founders Jason and Matthew Doucette have been making games since their elementary school days. It was Xbox Live Arcade that helped them turn a hobby int a profession.

"We had plans of developing games for XBLA for years and Microsoft's Dream Build Play 2008 Challenge convinced us to drop everything and enter," reveals Matthew. Despite a government-funded MIT team winning the competition, Xona persisted, thanks to what they describe as 'a healthy disregard for the impossible'.

As soon as Dream Build Play ended, Xona turned its attention Xbox Live's Indie Games channel as a release platform for its distinct shoot 'em up *Duality ZF*. A year later a more polished version of the game was entered into Dream Build Play 2009, placing second in Canada and seventh in the world.

Tax breaks are something are something Xona sees as secondary to what makes a studio succeed. "After many entrepreneurial projects, it always feels like the system is setup against you. There's always 1,001 ways to fail at any given endeavour," admits Matthew. "The point is: success comes from succeeding anyway. We pay little attention to taxes, the government, the industry – hose things are out of our immediate control, and become nothing more than excuses to fail.

The two are based in Nova Scotia out of convenience than anything – that's where their families live. But, "we want to prove that making games even in a small based such as Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, is possible," they say.

"I am most proud of the fact we stayed true to our childhood dreams and passions and decided to take a risk," Matthew adds. "A year ago this was nothing more than an idea, and now we are being published in magazines, interviewed on TV, and placed seventh in a global Microsoft contest; all because we decided to follow our heart. That's the true story that most interviews miss. Following dreams and passions can lead to your greatest rewards."

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Tall Stories

Recently inducted as one of Develop's 'Legends', Phil Harrison's career may occasionally sound like a work of fiction, but the following is all straight from the biography section. **Dave Roberts** talks through some highlights with the man himself…

Phil Harrison's remarkable career took him from the periphery of the UK's home computing boom of the '80s, to the vanguard of next generation interactive entertainment at the dawn of the 21st Century.

It took him all around the world. It brought him accolades, awards and the odd brickbat. Earlier this year, it saw him hailed as a Legend at the Develop Awards in Brighton. Here's why.

BEFORE SONY

It began, over 20 years ago, in a back bedroom in St Albans, Hertfordshire. Actually, the exact geography of Harrison's childhood home isn't specified, but whenever young British males are referred to as coding away on machines like the Oric, Spectrum or C64 in the early to mid-'80s, they are always said to be doing so in a 'back bedroom'.

So let's place young Phil there, ignoring *Neighbours* and *Blockbusters*; instead caught up in and gradually becoming part of an activity and era that is now the stuff of BBC historical drama. Stuck in suburbia, but plotting (programming) his way to far away places: to space, to fantastic lands, to the future.

First though, the blocky bits. In1984 he got his first ever 'job' in the industry. In the evenings and at weekends, he did some graphics for an Oric game called *Insect Insanity* and was paid £50.

Over the next couple of years, still at school, he picked up other bits and pieces, got paid similar fees and gradually got one toe on the edge of the industry.

When he left school a year later he decided to give games a go full time. He even made the classic creative career deal with his parents: "They weren't hugely keen, so we agreed I'd give it a year and if it didn't work out I'd either get a proper job or go to University. A few years back I flew them out to the States for a visit while I was working there and I finally checked it was okay for me to carry on. They seemed happy enough."

22 years ago, they were, understandably, slightly more concerned: "I was blagging jobs, pushing myself forward. I did a bit of work for Fergus McGovern at Probe. Then I got my first full time job, working for Mark Cale at System 3. My main duties were ordering the pizzas, making tea and designing a game called *Myth* on the C64."

In 1988 a group of System 3 directors left the firm to form Vivid Image. Harrison went with them and they put out a game, *Hammerfist*. These were subtly nuanced times.

Next up, in 1989, was the first of what Harrison calls his three big breaks. He got a call from Geoff Heath, then heading up the newly-formed European subsidiary of US publisher Mindscape, asking him to come down for a chat/interview.

Says Harrison: "When I arrived I was sure I must be lost, because it was so remote and so rural. But I trooped up the stairs to Geoff's office, with my portfolio under my arm, it must have looked a bit like an A-Level project.

"I presented it to Geoff, but I could see his eyes glaze over and it was clear he had no idea what I was talking about. He confirmed this by saying, 'I have no idea what you're talking about. Why don't you come and work for me and help me figure it out?'

"He gave me a brilliant break and that's something I'll always thank him and respect him for. He took a flyer on a 19-year-old who didn't really have any credentials."

> ***"Geoff Heath gave me a brilliant break and I'll always thank him and respect him for that. He took a flyer on a 19-year-old who had few credentials."***

Over the next three years, it's fair to say, Harrison gained some credentials. He became a proper producer at a proper company helping to create hit games. He worked directly with the European dev teams and learned to get the best out of projects and people.

Mindscape was Harrison's runway. Next, take-off.

SONY EUROPE

"In 1992 I got a phone call from Randy Thier (ex-EA, Accolade and Software Toolworks, the firm which had recently acquired Mindscape)," explains Harrison. "He'd joined Sony in America and asked me if I'd be interested in talking to Olaf Olaffson, the president of Sony's game business in the US.

"I was, of course. And a few days later I got a call from his secretary who said he'd be at Heathrow at 7:00 in the morning. I met him there and within 15 minutes, I had the job at Sony." Big break number two.

Harrison joined a company that was then called Sony Electronic Publishing. It had just started releasing cartridges for the SNES and Sega Mega Drive and didn't yet have a European division.

"I was employee number one over here and the office was the spare room in my house. There was no promise of PlayStation. But, it did coincide with the very public falling out between Nintendo and Sony at that summer's CES in Chicago. They were going to provide a CD-ROM drive for the SNES. Nintendo would sell it as a peripheral and Sony would sell it as a combined unit called PlayStation.

"They fell out over the way the royalties were divided up. That was very embarrassing to Sony and it's not how you do business with companies of that size and stature. What it ended up doing was creating a bit of a monster in terms of the passion and drive within Sony, particularly Ken Kutaragi, to prove everyone wrong. So, yes, whilst there was no promise, there was a nod a wink and a hint that I'd be hearing more about PlayStation."

In the summer of '93, he was asked to join a new top secret team called Computer Entertainment Project One.

"It was a skunkworks run out of Japan. I was asked to take the specifications and some very early demos and try to get some developer support."

The next year was one of evangelism, with Harrison prominent in the PlayStation pulpit. Highlights included the first secret showing to the European dev community at an empty office in Great Marlborough St; the inaugural E3 in the summer of '95 when US boss Steve Race walked up to the mic to say '$299', then sat down again; the UK coming out party at the Royal Lancaster Hotel; and, for Harrison personally, going to Japan in November 1994 and seeing *Ridge Racer* for the first time.

"I thought 'Wow, we really are going to have a launch.' Then they said, 'Would you like to see something else?' And they showed me *Tekken*. Big smiles."

And sure enough, in September 1995, Sony really did have a launch; a record-breaking, perception-shifting, boundary-breaking, expectation-recalibrating launch.

"In terms of hours per week it was one of the most intense times of my life, but such tremendous fun. You were there because everybody else was there, not least Chris Deering [then head of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe]. He was in first and left last – and went to the pub for three hours afterwards."

SONY AMERICA

Harrison's third big break came at ECTS in the autumn of 1996.

"Kutaragi came over for the show. We were sitting having a chat and he asked: would I

Harrison doing what many know him for best – espousing the virtue of Sony's gaming platforms

like to move to Tokyo. I remember it was a bit awkward, because I actually didn't. I like visiting Tokyo, but I didn't want to live there, so I tried to be polite and maybe a bit vague, but was basically saying no. And he said, 'Good, because I want you to go to San Francisco'. I was there four weeks later.

"I was at a point where I needed a new challenge. So this was perfect timing for me. I had two hats. I worked with developers and publishers from concept approval to packaging, helping them make the most of the machine.

"But there was also an R&D role which was to pave the way for PlayStation 2. What they did was make that bit of the business invisible to the rest of the company, not only so no rumours got out but also so no one got distracted. We even had fingerprint scanners to give us access to the department.

"That was probably the most incredible time: 'Have you got 10 minutes? We've got Steven Spielberg coming through and I want you to talk him through PlayStation 2.'

"Kutaragi phoned up one day and said, We've been invited to the Ranch. And of course it's Skywalker Ranch, and George Lucas wants to hear all about PlayStation 2. We had a lovely lunch with him, showed him some demos. Then he said, 'Would you like to see my new film?' And he showed us the work in progress on *Episode I* in his private screening room."

BACK TO SONY EUROPE

In summer 2000, with PlayStation 2 just a couple of months away, the force was, indeed, strong. But so was Harrison's desire to return to the UK.

"I was homesick, basically. I had a conversation with Chris Deering about opportunities and a few days later he called to say come and run the studios in Europe."

A desire to be closer to home was matched by a desire to get closer to the product, so everything aligned and, as PlayStation 2 was tumultuously received at retail, Harrison headed back to London.

Over the next few years he streamlined a fragmented organisation and oversaw a shift in emphasis from firepower to fun; less heavy metal, more Euro pop. In a good way.

One of the key early products was *EyeToy*.

"I remember having a discussion with the team near the end of its development. At that stage it had a very traditional video game progression mentality. You win two mini games and it unlocks two more that are a little bit harder. You win those and it unlocks some more and it gives you more stuff to play with and so on. And I said no, I wanted the whole thing unlocked straight away. That sense of challenge is compelling for a certain audience, but there's a whole other mass audience that just want to get on with it."

Then *SingStar* really got the party started.

"There was research that said we were close to saturation with certain demographics. And whilst there was no harm in doing another football and driving game, it wasn't going to move the needle. So perhaps it wasn't surprising that attention and resources were placed on those games that would get us from 10 per cent to 20 per cent then 30 per cent. Not 10 per cent to 11.5 and then maybe 14."

By this time, PlayStation 3 was looming. It would bring two things: a step-change in what consumers expected from a console and a dose of pain for Sony generally and Harrison personally.

The step change he expected; welcomed, in fact: "It used to be that you shipped the game, you waved goodbye and you made sure you'd packed in as much as you could. What we had to do was get used to the idea that shipping the disc was just the start of the relationship with the consumer. That's a change in the way you design, a change in the way you build.

> ***"There were times when I closed my laptop, took a deep breath and said, 'This isn't doing me any good. I need to stop reading this.'"***

"I think it's fair to say that in previous generations we worked with a lot of chewing gum and sticky tape. You know, it works, it's gone through QA, it does what it's supposed to do, but don't ask it to do anything else because it'll fall over.

"I started talking a lot about that internally. This piece of software you're designing now may still be the basis of an evolved gaming experience in 10 years time. Think about that at the design stage. Think about what's the difference between a product and a service. What's the difference between a consumer and a community? I'm not saying I knew, or we knew – there was no exclusivity of wisdom on this, we were all stumbling around a little bit – but we did know that these were the important questions."

E3 2005 was where Sony first showed PS3 – or at least some demos. Including 'the one with all the ducks'. They were equal parts mind-blowing and hackle-rising. Harrison recalls: "There were two reactions: 'Wow, that was incredible', followed by, 'I don't believe it.'

"The two demos I was most closely involved in were *MotorStorm* and *Killzone*. We were very careful to design those videos to be representative of what the final games would be like. And I'm pretty proud of the fact that we did that. If you put the video and the game side by side, there might have been some slight, specific differences, but in terms of the overall experience we were bang on.

"I remember reading one article that said it was a 'grand deception' and I was its 'chief architect'. That hurt, mainly because of all the people I knew who'd worked so hard to put these things together and who then simply weren't being believed.

"But, there were also times when I think the company gave the impression of arrogance. And that was something we spoke of internally and wanted to put right."

Too late, those brave, but anonymous men and… no, actually, just men at the frontline of forums and comment sections were already using the simple sword of emoticons and the trusty shield of acronyms to stick the boot in.

"It got personal. I won't deny that there were a couple of times when I closed my laptop, took a deep breath and said: 'This isn't doing me any good. I need to stop reading this now.'

E3 2005 was a definiing moment for PlayStation and Harrison. He showcased a number of key demos, including this LOD – 'Lots of Ducks' – one, and controversial video renders

"But there was also a belief that, You know what, we're not idiots, we do know what we're doing. We have a business plan, let's get on with it."

SONY WORLDWIDE

Part of the plan was to make Harrison head of a new division called Sony Worldwide Studios. Only, at first, no one told him.

"I always joke that I was the last to know about the formation of Worldwide Studios – and the fact that I was going to run it. Basically, Ken Kutaragi had given an internal speech to some senior managers at the Japanese office, he'd mentioned he was thinking of setting up this organisation that would combine our product development strength and he was going to get Phil to run it. He just failed to mention it to me. I called the following morning and said, 'Was there something you wanted to tell me…?'"

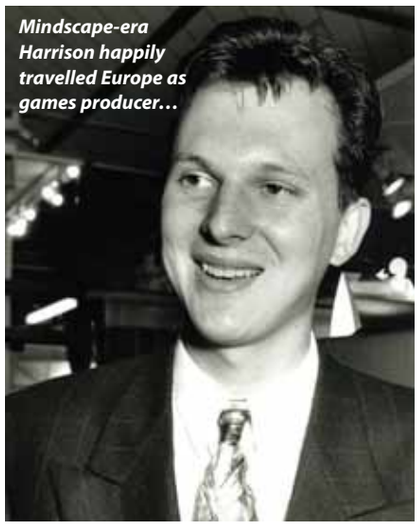
The 'team' was now 2,500 people strong and consisted of 14 studios in five countries.

Some people would have broken down simply at the thought of organising the Christmas party, but Harrison loved it.

"Without a doubt it was the best job in the industry. I was privileged to be given such a role and I hope I made a decent go of it."

The defining quality of his reign was co-operation: "The aim was to surface great work in the company. I was a great advocate of having a very public internal forum where everyone could share their ideas and their work. None of this hiding away for two years and then saying, 'Done it!' If you've got an idea, share it, show it. Inspire each other."

The results were, well, inspired: "There was an analysis done of review scores and in 2007, Sony Computer Entertainment



Mindscape-era Harrison happily travelled Europe as games producer…

Worldwide Studios was number one in terms of quality. That made me so proud of the teams and it was great to get that validation."

As well as generating software, Harrison recalls, "there was a very strong desire to maximise the relationship that Worldwide Studios had with the hardware design teams in Japan. So, we would become a high-performing customer of their technology, but we would also be a high influencer of their design decisions for the future. And that's very much a change in how hardware is designed within Sony."

He describes his time as the first boss of Sony Worldwide Studios as "a huge responsibility, great fun and a real privilege to be entrusted with that jewel." But, in 2008, after 15 years. Harrison left Sony.

AFTER SONY

"I had been given the opportunity to do things that no kid from St Albans would ever expect to be allowed to do. It had been wonderful. But there was also a realisation that I might be about to go into a repetition cycle, that I might be about to stop stretching and learning. I also had a desire to challenge myself entrepreneurially.

> ***"You don't have to sell 'things' through shops to make money. The industry has to wake up to this or watch its current model dwindle."***

"David Gardner had left EA earlier in the summer. We met up for lunch and between starter and main course we decided to set-up a company. It was a meeting of minds, a shared passion for some of the changes we saw happening. What we wanted to do was all about pure networked publishing, no reliance on physical media."

Gardner, however, was then invited to join the board of Atari and so the business model was transplanted to the publisher: "The idea was that taking our ideas to an existing company with a brand, operations and IP would get us where we wanted to go faster."

…and he was still smiling 20 years later, when named Development Legend at this year's Develop Awards

Just over a year, later, however, Harrison quit. This time, the reason was far more personal than strategic. He had a baby. "I decided to spend some time at home. The centre of gravity of the company was moving to America so it was the perfect opportunity to take some time out."

You get the feeling, however, that the ideas and entrepreneurial spirit that imbued his lunch with Garner haven't gone away.

"There is no doubt in my mind that there is a generation of kids already alive that will never buy physical media. And there are already pervasive platforms of distribution that will be way more important than any retailer could ever be.

"You don't have to sell 'things' through shops to make money. The new business models are already here and already accepted. Other ways of extracting value exist apart from a transaction at a till. The games industry has to wake up to that or it will watch its current business model dwindle and die."

How long before the death knell sounds for physical media? Harrison's advice is, listen carefully… "If you live in Korea it's already happened. And the last time I looked at my iPhone there was no disc drive. It's like that William Gibson quote, 'The future is already here, it's just unevenly distributed'.

"The risk is that what we consider the games market today becomes irrelevant and these other markets become way more important. It's a huge issue, especially for public companies who, of course, may gulp at foregoing short-term revenue for long-term value. That's a huge issue that the industry is going to have to wrestle with, especially the large market cap public companies, EA and Activision being the most obvious ones, but also the Japanese companies. How do they approach that J curve of re-inventing themselves?

"The games industry is addicted to retail revenues. They feed the entire machine and it makes the whole product planning process revolve around delivering a disc in a box in Q4. And then repeat. We have to step off that treadmill. Every boardroom in the industry is struggling with this."

Harrison, you suspect, will soon take up the cudgels himself. He admits he's already thinking about a return, but isn't ready to discuss specifics. "Put it this way, I'm not retired. The break is nice, but it is only a break."

Required

Call yourself a game developer? The **Develop** team – with some help from the sector's brightest minds – searches far and wide for the 50 games that everyone working in development should have played…

1. PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE DIABOLICAL BOX (LEVEL 5, DS)
Proof if proof were needed – and it sadly is – that a story and wonderfully detailed characters and a great art style can turn a relatively basic game into one of the most compelling experiences around. Make sure you play the US version, though: the voice acting is significantly better.

2. ANIMAL CROSSING
(NINTENDO, VARIOUS)
A game with absolutely nothing to do in it – and yet, at the same time, there are endless things to do, and endless pointless reasons to do them.

3. SPACE CHANNEL 5
(UGA, DC/PS2)
The campest game in existence, yes – and all the better for it. The ridiculousness is expounded by the glam sixties jazz and future-retro stylings, and for us it's far closer to any concept of synesthesia than *Rez*. More games should be about happiness, peace and love – and how better to convey that concept than mass euphoric dancing?

4. TOMB RAIDER
(CORE DESIGN, PC/PSX/SAT)
Given that they were developed at almost exactly the same time, *Super Mario 64* often unfairly gets the credit for getting 3D movement right – something Core's effort did equally well, if differently. Just remember the first time you swam through that underwater tunnel, executed that perfect vault, or scaled that seemingly-impossible cliff.

5. SUPER MARIO GALAXY
(NINTENDO, WII)
"This is where you can see how creative Shigeru Miyamoto is. How do you go about revisiting Mario on the Wii? Here lies an amazing answer to that question."
– Julien Merceron, Eidos

6. FLOWER
(THATGAMECOMPANY, PS3)
Think arty games and 'feelings through play' are all a load of wank? So did we, until *Flower*. The joy felt when bringing colour to nothingness is compounded by an actual use for the Sixaxis and some of the most understated but perfect music around.

7. GITAROO MAN
(INIS, PS2/PSP)
Music and gameplay doesn't have to mean merely *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero* – it can mean so much more, as anybody who fought their way to the penultimate encounter in *Gitaroo Man* can attest.

8. XENOGEARS
(SQUARE, PSX)
The moment that *Xenogears*' many disparate and confusing pieces come together to form a whole is special; not just because it's a brilliant plot twist, but because it makes your 30 hour 'hero's journey' feel like a single grain of sand in the flow of universal time – before empowering you to flip the whole hourglass upside down.

9. KING'S QUEST
(ROBERTA WILLAMS, PC)
"*Kings Quest*, for me, was the pioneer of narrative-driven adventures – an immersive world full of great characters and challenging puzzles. It set the scene for the hugely successful point and click adventure genre plus many spin-off genres. It's also interesting to note how similar it is to modern hits like the *Professor Layton* series."
– Patrick O'Luanaigh, nDreams

Playing

10. ZONE OF THE ENDERS 2
(KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS, PS2)
The original *Zone of the Enders* made robot fighting less… well, robotic, making the player feel like a ballet choreographer for hundred-ton hulkbots. The sequel added some incredible set pieces that should go down in the history books, plus some of the most amazing particle effects ever. For the time, anyway.

11. CANABALT
(SEMI SECRET, FLASH/IPHONE)
Not necessarily the best example of procedurally-generated content in a game, but Semi Secret's randomly-generated levels, based on a smartly modest set of variables, making it worth paying attention to. The running game's one-button play mechanic, complemented with a sense of real speed and inertia, is also something to envy.

12. THE LOST VIKINGS
(BLIZZARD, AMIGA)
"The way you had to learn to use the three characters' different abilities to help each other overcome the challenges was brilliant, and the way the design team constantly managed to create new obstacles that meant you had to use the base abilities for each character in new interesting ways was really impressive." – *Billy Thomson, Ruffian*

13. HALF-LIFE 2
(VALVE, VARIOUS)
We barely need to mention reasons why, really. Although the pacing at the beginning might be a bit hit-and-miss – hello sewers and Route Canal – the build up to the Citadel is one of the most perfectly-executed moments ever.

14. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
(NES, NINTENDO)
"Write a Game Design Masters thesis, and call it 'What Would *Zelda* Do?' A chapter on progression, one on purity of mechanics, another on boss fights, and level design, and visual evolution, and, and, and. There's not a gram of fat on it. Some rules, when followed, guarantee better results, like the photographer's Rule of Thirds – and Hyrule." – *Ben Board, Microsoft*

15. FAÇADE
(PROCEDURAL ARTS, PC/MAC)
It's not the best looking game, no, but you're not playing it for the graphics. This game, which is about the decay of a relationship between man and wife, puts players in the role of a third party asking questions and trying to council the couple back to romance. It's use of dialogue and player inputs to create drama should be admired by all – and emulated by more people.

16. FOOTBALL MANAGER
(SPORTS INTERACTIVE, PC)
The reason this is worth studying is simple: spreadsheets don't have a right to be this much fun.

17. FALLOUT 3
(BETHESDA, PC/XBOX 360/PS3)
Open world games are ten-a-penny, but the flexibile modularity of the narrative and the mixture of RPG and shooter has set a template many should copy.

How many of the games above can you match up to their entries?

18. PARAPPA THE RAPPER
(NANA ON-SHA, PSX/PSP)
"I need to go just as bad as you / What I had this morning I don't even want to say to you!" Need we say more? Never had diarrhoea proved such a brilliant game motive.

19. ICO
(SCEJ, PS2)
"*Ico* needs to be played not because it is the best game ever. It isn't. But because it is so beautiful in its simplicity, so haunting in its ambiance, so moving. It is a truly inspiring work of art." – *Charles Cecil, Revolution*

20. SKATE (EA, VARIOUS)
Proof that, actually, you don't need motion controllers to come up with a control scheme that perfectly mimics the sport.

21. LEFT 4 DEAD
(VALVE, PC)
"Many people talked about *Call of Duty 4* reinvigorating multiplayer games online, but *Left 4 Dead* reinvented them. Valve managed to create a game that enforced co-operative play whilst simultaneously creating a whole new brand of versus player – all the while creating a solid horror experience." – *Jim Mummery, Doublesix*

22. BOOMSHINE
(DANNY MILLER, FLASH)
A bunch of coloured circles and one click: that's all *Boomshine* is. But it's also one of the most addictive examples of reductive design ever. Only one click required.

23. SHADOW COMPLEX
(CHAIR, XBOX 360)
How do you take an old and outdated genre and repackage it for the modern market? Exactly as Chair have done. Slight issues with background shooting aside, it's a wonderful example of next-gen flourishes in a digitally-distributed package. Shame about the shocking writing though.

24. XENOSAGA EPISODE I – III
(MONOLITHSOFT, PS2)
So while eight hours of cutscenes per episode is something you'd not want to ape, *Xenosaga*'s portrayal of broken human relationships – from mother/daughter to brother/sister and even creator/created – breaks through a humanistic frontier beyond the saddening 'male + female = love interest' trope on which most games writing is stuck.

25. WORLD OF WARCRAFT
(BLIZZARD, PC)
Don't play it to ape it – please, there's more than enough wannabes to go around – but what *WoW* really shows is that the key to reaching more people is to be kinder, and guide the player through that massive journey rather than just set them loose.

26. RITTAI PICROSS
(HAL LABORATORY, DS)
Making things 3D for the sake of it is not always the best move, but HAL Laboratory's attempt to add weight to the pixel-perfection of *Picross* is brilliant. Don't rely on skill points and new abilities to make the player stronger – help them gradually figure out new tactics themselves.

27. XCOM SERIES
(GOLLOP BROTHERS, PC)
"It's a turn-based strategy game, yet it makes you genuinely terrified to look around the corner. It turns what people thought as one of the most hardcore genres into something that a lot of people remember with very fond memories." – *James Brooksby, Doublesix*

28. SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO
(CAPCOM, ARCADE/PSX)
Sometimes mechanics are so perfect that, even though the AI might regularly beat you, the act of trying is satisfying enough.

29. DRAGON'S LAIR
(ARCADE)
"As an example of how easy it is to miss the point of videogames, *Dragon's Lair* is canonical, and so by definition must be included. Used creatively QTEs are a respectable mechanic, but even 25 years on *Dragon's Lair* remains a cautionary tale about what gameplay isn't, that can – and must – frighten our children, and our children's children." – *Ben Board, Microsoft*

30. FINAL FANTASY VII
(SQUARE, PSONE)
"It was one of the biggest RPGs of all time, and it was the first time many people experienced big emotions in a game. I've played it through 5 times!"
– *Julien Merceron, Eidos*

31. SLITHERLINK
(HUDSON, DS)
It might be a pretty standard puzzle, and so hardly innovative, but it's the attention to detail that makes Hudson's DS implementation so incredible – as far as to introduce jokes into the solutions.

32. PORTAL
(VALVE, PC/XBOX/PS3)
"It brings out the designer in all of us by presenting you with a very simple concept, then slowly but surely training you to use that concept in different ways to progress through the levels. By the end of the game your mind is completely brimming with ideas for puzzles you could create to baffle your friends." – *Billy Thomson, Ruffian*

33. FLIGHT CONTROL
(FIREMINT, IPHONE)
"Easy does it? Hardly. *Missile Command* for the finger-flicking generation."
– *Owain Bennallack, Develop daddy*

34. SPIDER-MAN 2
(TREYARCH, XBOX/PS2)
It might seem like an odd choice, but *Spider-Man 2* was the first game to really capture the feel of being a superhero. Swinging around that city was a joy that never got old. Sadly, none of its sequels have managed to get close to that magic.

35. REZ
(UGA, DC/PS2)
Too much has been written by a certain set of people about the wonders of this game, but *Rez* is a success that it is worth referring too. Its sparse graphics and gameplay, which pushes music to the fore, and relatively short playtime remain uncopied to this day.

36. SENSIBLE SOCCER
(SENSIBLE SOFTWARE, AMIGA)
What *Sensible Soccer* shows is that you need to translate a sport into a workable gameplay mechanic, rather than make game fit around a sport's real-world rules.

37. INDIANA JONES AND THE STAFF OF KINGS (LUCASARTS, WII)
Proof that if it's gone that bad, you can always hastily come up with a retro easter egg to sell a game.

38. METAL SLUG
(SNK, ARCADE)
The game might be impressive mechanically, but the real jewel in *Metal Slug*'s crown is its still-unsurpassed hand-drawn animation, which adds so much character to the game that it could be said to contribute more to the experience than the unrelenting action.

39. MIDWINTER
(MIKE SINGLETON, AMIGA)
"*Midwinter* provided a huge open world to explore many years before the *GTA* series, with a great story, characters to find and multiple vehicles to use. I remember getting totally and utterly immersed in the *Midwinter* world with its 3D graphics and freeform gameplay. It was truly ahead of its time."
– Patrick O'Luanaigh, nDreams

40. R-TYPE
(IREM, ARCADE)
"A surprisingly thoughtful horizontal shooter with brilliantly varied level design. The usage of the Force power-up, as a means of defense either forward or back, added a tricky puzzle based element to the proceedings as well. Traversing an entire level to realise it was one large spaceship was a clever use of assets for one and made the whole endeavour feel much more epic in scope."
– Ollie Barder, Doublesix

41. ASTRO BOY
(SONIC TEAM, PS2)
Yes, it's sub-par on a lot of fronts, but *Astro Boy* has the best flying controls of all time – making aimlessly gliding around the impressive reconstruction of future Tokyo much more fun than actually following the game's path.

42. THE SETTLERS
(BLUE BYTE, AMIGA)
Rather than relying on stats, graphs or readouts to indicate the successes or failures of your colonisation, *The Settlers* conveyed the results graphically through the actions of your citizens and the appearance of the world.

43. OE-CAKE!
(PROMETECH PC AND MAC)
Not a game per-se, but *OE-CAKE!* – Prometech's outrageously fun sandbox demo app for its soft-body and fluid simulation technology OctaveEngine Casual – is so much fun that you'll soon be making amazing set-pieces and sharing them with friends.

44. AQUAFOREST
(HUDSON, IPHONE)
Hudson takes the tech powering *OE-CAKE!* and makes an iPhone game out of it, fully utilising the iPhone's accelerometer to play with physics – and the player's intellect – in even more astonishing ways. The less said about the frame-rate the better, though.

45. FINAL FANTASY X-2
(SQUARE-ENIX, PS2)
Any game that starts with a pop concert is something special, but what's great about *FFX-2* is its girl-power take on the existing *Final Fantasy X* world. Lighter and breezier than traditional emo Square Enix fare, it's also an excellent lesson in business: it reused assets from *FFX* and took one year to develop with just a third of the original team – and yet still sold four million copies with a Metacritic rating of 85.

46. YOSHI'S ISLAND
(NINTENDO, SNES)
"For today's diverse audiences, there are no universal reference points. Any kind of canon is necessarily reductive. And, as a principle of civilization, models of perfection should be lampooned and overthrown. But I can't love anyone who doesn't love *Yoshi's Island*."
– Jonathan Smith, Traveller's Tales

47. GRAND THEFT AUTO
(ROCKSTAR NORTH, VARIOUS)
Any of them will suffice; the staples that make it a success are the same through the franchise. Yes, there's a sense of freedom, and a closely-controlled scope that widens with player progress – but its real achievements (whether you like them or not) are in story. The narratives are epic, and usually unshaped by player behaviour. But the level of detail – whether you appreciate or tolerate the Hollywood-aping aspects are not – is to be envied.

48. STREET FIGHTER IV
(CAPCOM, ARCADE/CONSOLE)
Capturing the spirit of the seminal *Street Fighter II* while simultaneously making it contemporary and relevant once again, *Street Fighter IV* is exactly what you imagined the series might one day become as a child.

49. BATTLE GAREGGA
(RAIZING, ARC/SATURN)
Shoot and dodge. That's how simple it is. But behind it all is the most ridiculously detailed model for deciding how the game plays out – from the order you power up weapons to how you navigate the interface. 13 years (and over 400 pages of fan docs) later, people are still far from completely understanding its inner workings.

50. ANY TRULY AWFUL GAME
(COUNTLESS)
"I'm not going to name any names, but play the bad games – not the slightly disappointing ones, but the really bad ones – and you'll learn far more from them than the greats. You can see how someone could interpret a viable mechanic or brief and still get so wrong. You can see someone can try and imitate a *God of War* or *Zelda* very closely and create something that doesn't still work, and you can see what was missing which takes a long way toward getting it right yourself." *– Jim Mummery, Doublesix*

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KEY RELEASE: Ready at Dawn Engine

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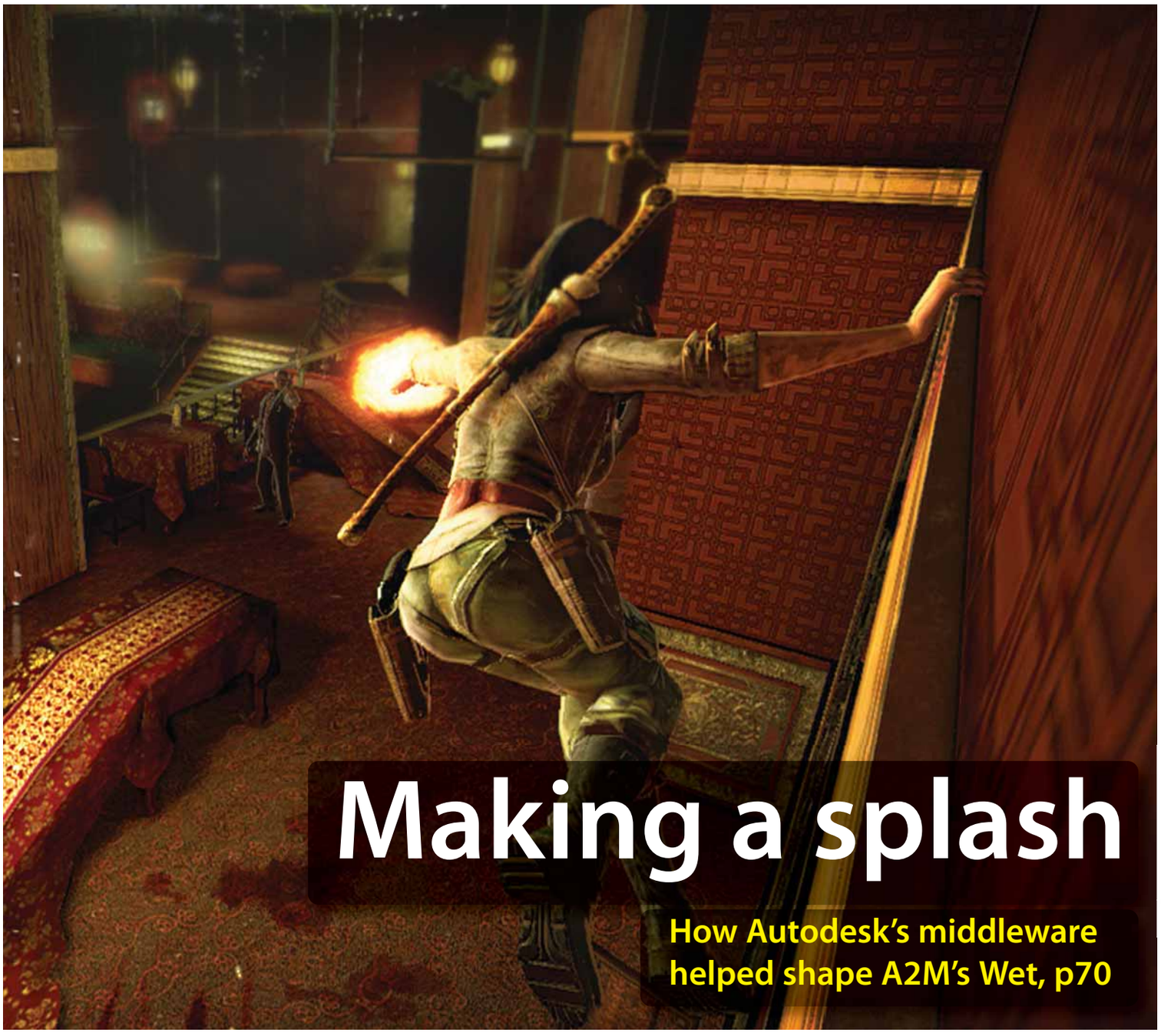

Making a splash

How Autodesk's middleware helped shape A2M's Wet, p70

UNITY FOCUS: UNITY GOES FREE > P71

United they stand?

OKAY, SO WE'VE ALREADY written about this in the news section (*page 10*) and Unity themselves write about it on page 68, but there's still fat to be chewed on the subject of Unity going free.

First of all, of course, it's brilliant news. Unity is undoubtably one of the best packages for quickly creating games and being able to rapidly iterate on them. Having this kind of power available to everyone is another really big step down the path of democratising development.

One thing intrigues me, however: how are the people that have already paid money for their licence going to say? Unity has always prided itself on its community, the thousands of vocal (and evangelical) users that are often ready and willing to help. The problem with vocal users is that they're great to have when they're on your side, but a thorn in the side when not, and this move is undoubtably going to make some people angry that they've shelled out $200 for something that is now free.

Of course, there's no sense in that logic – $200 was a stupidly low price point for what they got in the first place – but since when did logic have any place on an internet forum? The news wasn't public at the time that we went to press, so I've no idea of what the fallout is like – maybe they're more understanding than I give them credit for.

But the real interesting thing it shows is that Unity is banking on the big guys to fund itself – a clear sign that the revenue coming from sales of the Indie version isn't hugely important to the company, and that the engine is transitioning nicely to professional games. And with the support for bigger and better platforms on its way – Xbox 360 is announced, but you only need to look at job listings to see the others that Unity has in its sights – that's not going to slow down.

Ed Fear
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NetGains

With the Khronos Group's WebGL specification already picking up support before its first release, could the browser gaming boom skip plugins completely? **Ed Fear** spoke to Arun Ranganathan, Mozilla CEO and chair of the WebGL working group, to find out more…

What is WebGL, and how does it relate to OpenGL?
The WebGL project was initiated by Mozilla earlier this year as a Khronos working group, and soon gained active support and participation from browser vendors in addition to various other companies, including Nvidia, AMD and Ericsson.

The project began as a Firefox extension created by Mozilla's Vladimir Vukicevic, which initially showcased a low-level JavaScript API on top of OpenGL ES. It soon became clear that in addition to the 2D drawing API exposed through the HTML5 Canvas element, the Web needed an API for hardware-accelerated 3D graphics. Starting with pre-existing building blocks that were already in circulation on various hardware made a lot of sense, and so Mozilla approached the Khronos Group, which is the standards-setting organization behind OpenGL, OpenGL Shading Language, and OpenGL ES, amongst other media standards.

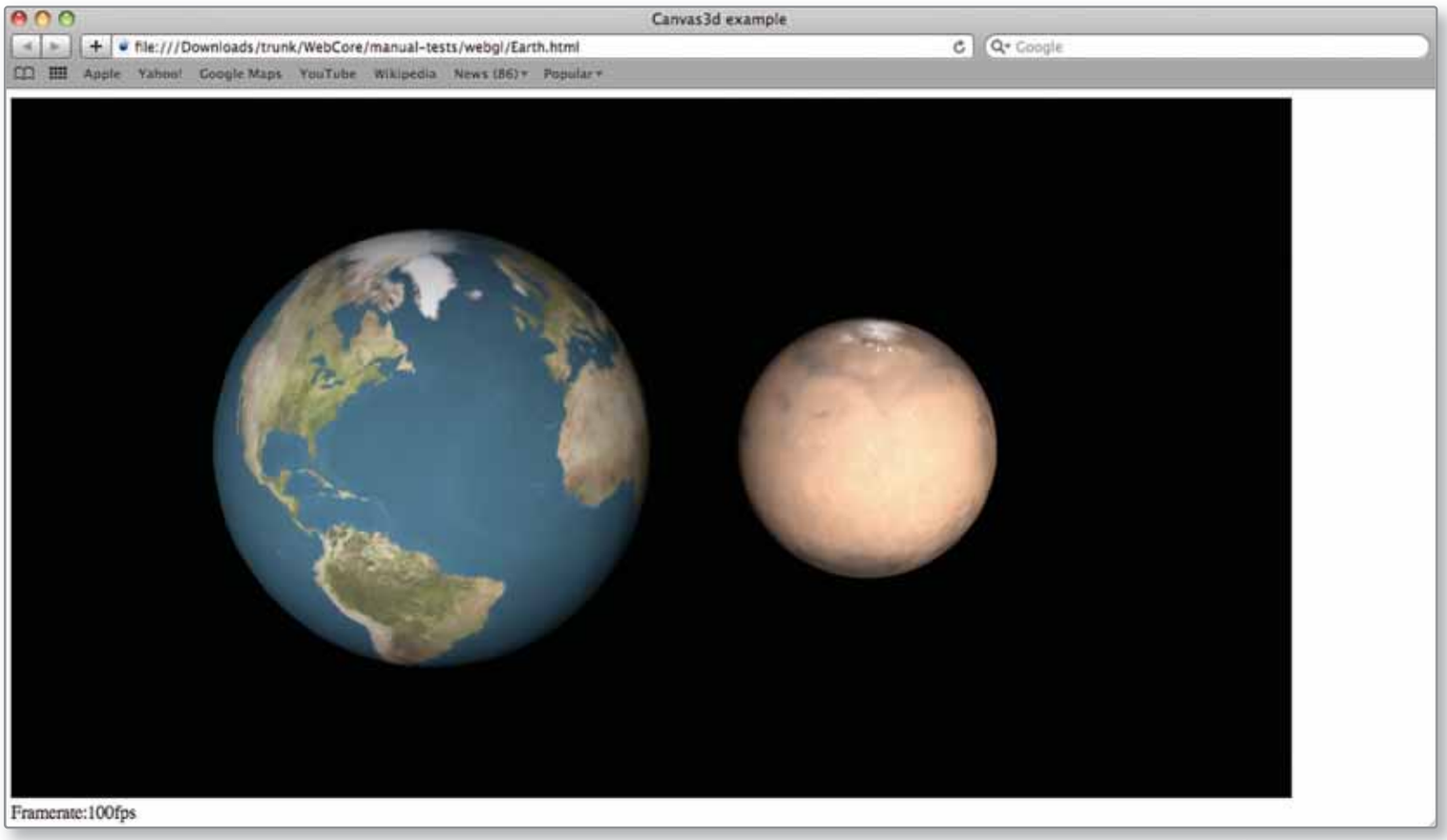
WebGL essentially brings OpenGL ES to the Web. Developers familiar with OpenGL ES 2.0 will recognize WebGL as a shader-based API, with constructs in JavaScript that are semantically similar to those of the underlying OpenGL ES 2.0 API. It stays as faithful as possible to the OpenGL ES 2.0 specification, with some concessions made for what developers expect out of JavaScript. We look forward to the intersection of OpenGL developers and Web developers, and are greatly anticipating the kinds of Web applications and Web pages they will build.

Are all of the browser companies behind it? Is there an estimated roadmap for uptake of the standard?
Major browser vendors are behind it – Google, Opera, Mozilla, and Apple. There has been some press about builds of Safari, Chromium, and Firefox already showing beta builds that implement WebGL. Even before a specification has been released, developers have been able to look at the source code of these browsers and build demos showing WebGL in action. We're optimistic about uptake of the standard.

What competing standards exist in the in-browser 3D space?
The Web3D Consortium came up with X3D, although I don't classify that as a competing standard, since it aims to solve a different problem than WebGL. Declarative representations of 3D graphics can live alongside a technology such as WebGL, and so I would say technologies like X3D are complementary to WebGL, and can envision JavaScript libraries that support X3D built on top of WebGL. All other 3D technologies are used with browser plugins, whereas WebGL will be implemented natively by browsers.

> ***"It became clear that in addition to the 2D drawing API exposed through the HTML5 Canvas element, the Web needed an API for 3D graphics."***

There have been some creative uses of 2D APIs to simulate 3D, or even emerging technologies like 'perspective 3D' which enables



The demos might not be hugely impressive at the moment, but the standard isn't even finalised – and yet browser builds supporting WebGL are already out there

3D transformations of 2D elements in Microsoft's Silverlight. These are very different than what WebGL does, which is to provide safe access from Web content to hardware-accelerated 3D graphics, or to software rendering, by providing a familiar API in the 3D space. Again, technologies like Flash and Silverlight require a plugin; also, currently, they don't constitute competing 'standards', since they don't leverage a standardised way to access hardware-accelerated 3D graphics.

Google has its own 3D-in-browser solution, O3D, but is also a part of the WebGL initiative. How do the two approaches differ?
Google's O3D is an interesting and promising technology, but it starts with a much higher level API than WebGL. While WebGL is a low-level API with no notion of a scene graph API, O3D provides higher level abstractions in JavaScript, including ways to work with scene graphs.

Currently, O3D is built as a C++ plugin. We anticipate that in the future, technologies like O3D can be built on top of WebGL, taking advantage of radical JavaScript performance improvements. The Web has always benefited from libraries like Dojo, jQuery, and Prototype, which provide Web developers with programmatic conveniences on top of what browsers expose. We anticipate the same thing for 3D programming on the Web.

Speaking of JavaScript – does it offer speed disadvantages when compared to plugins? Does the memory footprint of the browser environment affect things?
JavaScript performance has increased dramatically in Web browsers, and there is a great deal of competition amongst browser vendors to introduce even more improvements. Through software techniques such as tracing, Firefox's latest JavaScript engine (named 'TraceMonkey') can run certain JavaScript programs at least three to four times as fast as some other browsers. We're very confident that JavaScript is a great environment for 3D programming on the Web.

> ***"JavaScript performance has increased dramatically in Web browsers, and there is a great deal of competition between browser vendors."***

Do you think that plugins will start to become a rarer thing as time goes on?
The plugins API serves a useful role on the Web – that of enriching the capabilities of browsers, and of delighting consumers with new experiences. Flash is a shining example of this, and enjoys ubiquity. Advances made by browser plugins and extensions have influenced the direction of the Web. For instance, the Web now supports audio and video natively through the HTML5 audio and video elements and their affiliated APIs.

The Web platform is getting more and more feature rich; many technologies that were once the purview of proprietary and closed-source plugins are emerging as open standards, and are in open source implementations such as Firefox. To the extent that developers are able to deploy interactive, visually rich, and accessible applications on the Web without needing plugins, some plugins may be obviated.

Additional concerns with plugins are security issues, as well as general memory management concerns. In addition to ensuring that their browser is up to date, consumers have to also ensure that their plugins are up to date. Mozilla wants to ensure that the plugin experience continues to be safe for consumers, since a vulnerable plugin can put users at risk.

How does WebGL handle legacy browsers?
Legacy browsers won't have support for WebGL. Firefox beta builds have introduced support for WebGL; other browsers that have support for WebGL in beta builds include Safari and Chrome. When these browsers are released as final quality software, a browser upgrade will be necessary.

What sort of experiences do you visualise being enabled through WebGL?
Some demos that showcase WebGL exist already, but beyond that, I envision 3D games in Web applications, and 3D-enriched Web pages, including medical imagery, topographic maps, and information visualisations. Along with all the usual presentational technology standards on the Web – SVG, CSS, HTML and JavaScript – I look forward to what developers can do with the added capability of WebGL.
www.khronos.org

GUIDE: FACIAL ANIMATION

It's time that game characters laid off the botox – and there's tools out there to help, **Ed Fear** discovers…

With the huge advances in motion capture over the past few years, it's fair to say that character animation in games is better than it's ever been. Combined with technology designed to help developers string these animations together, such as NaturalMotion's Morpheme and Havok's Behaviour, game heroes like Nathan Drake are orders of magnitude more realistic in their movements than in the previous generation.

Facial animation is perhaps the next frontier. Although it's already improving at a rapid pace, there's still a large proportion of game players – particularly those casual gamers, to whom the usual anachronisms of real-time computer graphics aren't quite so forgivable – who aren't convinced by the current state of facial animation. Speaking about *Uncharted 2*, one *Develop* staffer remarked: "It's beautiful, and the cutscene animation is amazing, but for the most part it really feels like their faces are frozen in place."

Perhaps the real advances here, too, will come from the Venn diagram-like crossover between emerging motion capture technology and more impressive tools to help shape that raw data.

Here we profile four popular solutions to see exactly what it is that makes them useful, and …

AUTODESK SOFTIMAGE

DEVELOPER
Autodesk
CLIENTS
Capcom, Konami
PLATFORMS
PC, Linux
PRICE
From $2,995
CONTACT
Via website

Face Robot is now a part of the Softimage package

www.autodesk.com

The reason Autodesk Softimage is featured here is that, since acquiring XSI, Autodesk has integrated the previously-separate Face Robot toolset into the standard Softimage package. Using Face Robot, artists paint weight maps, wrinkle maps and skin weights to determine the movements of muscles when motion data is then applied. Autodesk has also added a Maya exporter, which means you can quickly bring fully solved Face Robot heads into Maya for further work.

VOICE-O-MATIC

DEVELOPER
Di-O-Matic
CLIENTS
Rockstar, Sega, THQ, Activision
PLATFORMS
Plug-in for Max, Maya and Softimage
PRICE
$349
CONTACT
Via website

Voice-O-Matic has been used by a wide range of game developers

www.di-o-matic.com

Voice-O-Matic is pretty simple: by following a four-step wizard, you can give the program your recorded voice files and it automatically generates mouth and face movements that can then be applied to your models, be they shape-based or rig-based. It supports most languages, and animators are free to adjust the results, which are stored as standard keys on Bezier controllers. It's also available as part of Di-O-Matic's Character Pack alongside other facial modelling and animation tools.

IMAGE METRICS

DEVELOPER
Image Metrics
CLIENTS
Konami, Rockstar North
PLATFORMS
N/A
PRICE
Varies
CONTACT
Via website

Image Metrics' solution was behind Metal Gear Solid 4

www.image-metrics.com

Okay, so it's not a tool per-se – for the most part, the magic is done by Image Metrics themselves and funnelled back to the developers – but there has been some mention of opening up parts of that pipeline for developers to do themselves. Also new is a tiered service system: the Value package is perfect for secondary characters, Pro is aimed at in-game cutscenes and Premium is super-powerful, offering 'pore-level analysis of facial movement' ideal for glitzy pre-rendered sequences.

LIFESTUDIO: HEAD SDK

DEVELOPER
Lifemode Interactive
CLIENTS
Ice-Pick, Firefly Studios
PLATFORMS
Xbox, Xbox 360, PS2, PC
PRICE
On request
CONTACT
Via website

Lifestudio:Head can even dynamically generate heads in real-time

www.lifemi.com

Specifically designed for facial animation in real-time, Lifestudio:Head's real-time SDK features the ability for players to create their own heads in-game or via 'the laws of genetics', which sounds slightly ominous. It allows AI routines in the game to dynamically change the facial animation, and can even hook into text-to-speech systems to animate based on the generated phonemes. The LifeStudio Pro app also features all the automatic lip sync features you'd expect.

KEYRELEASE

Ready at Dawn Engine

As another developer throws its own hat into the middleware ring, **Ed Fear** spoke to Ready at Dawn president Didier Malenfant about what makes its offering so different...

DEVELOPER: Ready at Dawn
PRICE: On request
CONTACT: engine.readyatdawn.com

Top left: God of War: Chains of Olympus

Top Right: Ready at Dawn's Daxter

Above: Didier Malenfant

It shouldn't need saying, but if any developer is going to suddenly enter the game engine licensing arena, it's going to need a reputation for excelling technically on at least one platform.

Few studios have managed to make such an impact on one platform as Californian studio Ready at Dawn. Its transferral of Sony's holy *God of War* and *Jak & Daxter* franchises to PSP remains one of the platform's jewels (and the team's subsequent bombastic return of all of its PSP devkits gained just as much attention; the later U-turn less so).

The time since has seen them add PS3 and Xbox 360 support. But if you're a successful game studio, why burden yourself with the effort of breaking into a whole new market?

"We have been making games for more than six years now, so we're familiar with what it takes to see a project through," says studio president Didier Malenfant.

"Tools are everything. When people got a chance to see ours, we were being told that we should be licensing them. Combine this with the fact that pretty much no one seems to be satisfied with the current state of things in the middleware space and you've got what made us decide to make the step. I think we have something to bring to the table and I know we can help a lot of people in making their games."

Ready at Dawn clearly has a number of core beliefs when it comes to game development – from the editor (*see Editor-in-Grief, right*) to how game designers implement behaviours and script interactivity. Don't go looking for a list of supported scripting languages – it doesn't support any.

"It's one of those religious issues to some extent," explains Malenfant. "There are two approaches currently: text-based scripting and visual-based scripting. In the first one, you take a language that is often less complete and full featured than a real programming language, you use tools to support it that are less complete or stable than real development environments, and then you go give this to non-programmers like designers and artists. How this can ever be a good idea is beyond me.

> ***"No one seems to be satisfied with the state of things in the middleware space. I think we have something to bring."***

"In the second case, everyone who has tried to use visual scripting so far has realised that it just doesn't scale up. It looks pretty with simple demo scripts but as soon as the behaviors start getting complicated, it turns into a mess. We chose a different approach, which is to allow our programmers to develop simple scripting modules and our designers to build behaviors by attaching these modules to entities in the game like building blocks."

SUPPORT PANTS

Another important thing to consider in the post Silicon Knights/Epic world is the vendor/game studio divide, and managing it so that licensees don't feel that they are second fiddle to the studio's own products.

Malenfant sees the problem, but doesn't believe that the other solution – licensing tech from companies who don't make their own products – is any less risky.

"You can't license something that you're not using yourself to make games. It just doesn't work. How can you understand the requirements and workflow issues involved in game development? On the other hand, if you're going to licence your technology, you cannot expect people to have to either just make clones of your own games or spend a year ripping out or rewriting parts of your tech that they don't want."

Ready at Dawn's approach, then, is to completely distance the engine licensing business from the studio, treating it as just another licensee.

It's going to be a difficult balancing act to manage, but Malenfant isn't denying that. "We have a lot of work ahead of us but, just like when we started Ready At Dawn, we're going about it one step at a time and with a no-nonsense approach."

EDITOR-IN-GRIEF

One particularly tantalising morsel hidden away in the pre-release information is that the level editor included as part of the engine's toolset is 'non-proprietary', and that it provides 'access to the industry's standard in 3D editing'.

Eager for more information, we pressed Malenfant on what that means. Sadly, he was tight-lipped: "We haven't yet announced everything in the pipeline that will shed light on our editing environment, but I can say that we strongly believe that the days of proprietary editors are over.

"Why force your team to learn a different tool than what they normally use? We let artists, level designers, modelers and game designers use one single environment to edit all game content; there's no artificial separation between art, modeling and level design. It's part of of theme of having everything integrated, all in one place. We like things simple and that simply work."

Our money's on some sort of Max/Maya integration, and given Malenfant's earlier mention of combining the studio's tech with existing middleware and licensing out the whole thing it's not beyond the realm of possibility that only one package will be supported, but will be included in the deal.

It's once again a religious stance, but one that the team is very clearly pushing on customers – a rare thing in the days of middleware trying to be everything to everyone. Then again, that's where that reputation helps – and it might be worth rethinking your methodology for.

HEARD ABOUT

Operation Flashpoint

John Broomhall talks to Codie's crack audio squad about scoring a visceral battlefield experience…

DEVELOPER:
Codemasters

PUBLISHER:
Codemasters

AUDIO TEAM:
Audio director: Stephen Root
Audio manager: John Davies
Lead audio designer: Oliver Johnson
Audio designer: Jethro Dunn

In *Operation Flashpoint*, if your ears aren't working, you're a dead man." So says audio director Stephen Root, a point emphasised in a TV commercial for the new title which, unusually, starts with just game audio against black frames. In a stunning simulation of the visceral unease of battlefield combat, where a careless head raised above a parapet is almost guaranteed to be blown off, hyper-aware listening is vital as you inch forward, often pinned down by an ever-present threat.

Realism is the watchword, so there's no 'Hollywood-isation' and no effort spared on the weapons sound recordings. They took place on a shooting range in Nashville, featuring the use of complex capture set-ups – close, 200m and 500m mic'ing – to achieve the striking in-game juxtaposition of distant sound effects' perspective against terrifying bullet-bys and impacts that bypass the brain to provoke a primal fear response.

"The flipside of the coin is that when you fire your own weapons – say an M32 automatic grenade launcher, which to be honest, in real life sounds like a massive stapler – you get the up-close and personal, relatively unimpressive sounds of the trigger and barrel movement followed by a hugely impressive explosion in the far distance," says lead audio designer Oliver Johnson.

The audio team's all-pervasive quest for authenticity means in-game music was never on the cards, though in the menus a beautiful, sorrowful, and achingly bleak score powerfully communicates the gravity of taking up arms to face a murderous enemy. However, as Johnson was only too aware, with no background music his sound design would be fully exposed: "Getting the world ambience right was critical and, thanks to recordist Chris Watson, we obtained some excellent source material. Chris records ambiences all over the planet and actually had bespoke captures made on the next island along from the one the game features – recordings taken at various heights above sea level and covering grasses, vegetation and wildlife. The quality was unbelievable and the resultant material really inspiring."

> ***"In Operation Flashpoint, if your ears aren't working, you're a dead man."***
>
> Stephen Root, Codemasters

Variation was also an issue, according to audio designer Jethro Dunn: "Variation is vital or the realism spell gets broken very quickly. That's why we spent a lot of time experimenting with the sound of the wind, creating a dynamically changing envelope that enables a mere 28 seconds of assets to cover 14 hours' gameplay. It sounds very different depending on the player character's height above sea level and whether or not they are facing into the wind. I defy anyone to hear the joins!"

In a game where mission engagements may involve 200-300 metres' traversal of the landscape, the sense of space created by the sound treatment of both ambience and weapons alike works well with pre-baked reverb from the original weapons recordings, contrasting superbly with the terrifying dry snap of bullets flashing past your head and the high drama of ordnance hitting your immediately surrounding scenery. It's genuinely un-nerving.

Also impressive are the various speech systems. "If you're close enough to a fellow-soldier, you'll hear them speaking as normal but when they get beyond a certain distance, radiofied dialogue kicks in," explains audio manager John Davies.

"The choice from pools of speech clips performed at various intensities is hooked to three game states, stealth, normal and high tension, from whispering to heat-of-the-battle barks. We also hook into the morale system covering postivity through general well-being to injured status. Marines are trained to believe they're invincible so it's a real shock for them to get hit and suddenly face their mortality. There are no corny 'tell my mother I love her' lines – it's all about the psychological reality and awful pain they have to deal with in those moments."

Meanwhile the mix does not fatigue, enhancing the game's natural procedurally generated contrasts of eerie quietness and terrifying danger. "We took about two solid weeks in an external surround sound mixing studio for the audio balancing," says Root. "That was greatly helped by the FMOD tools allowing Olly and Jethro to roll up their sleeves and change technical, replay and implementation parameters on the fly."

"We're grateful for the very positive reception we've had from consumers and reviewers alike and we even get real marines on our forums telling us it's exactly how it should sound. As a team, we're absolutely itching to make the next one and keep building on this body of work."

Above, from top: Oliver Johnson, Jethro Dunn, John Davies, and Stephen Root

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www.johnbroomhall.co.uk

UNREAL ENGINE 3 POWERS

PLANET 51: THE GAME

Madrid-based Ilion Animation Studios and Pyro Studios are taking a unique approach to their upcoming Sony Pictures feature film, *Planet 51*, and its Sega-published video game. Pyro has developed the game while sister company Ilion has focused on the movie, enabling teams behind both releases to share digital assets and work together in a creative atmosphere.

James Franco, game director at Pyro Studios, said the impact of Unreal Engine 3 on the game's development has reduced the amount of time involved as well as the team size. The most important impact that Unreal has had on this project, he said, is that the technology has allowed most of the team to focus on the gameplay aspects, which has resulted in a better game.

At the peak of production, the team at Pyro included more than 40 developers working with Unreal Engine 3 for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 versions of the game. Franco said that out of this team, just a few coders and a few artists had previous experience using Unreal.

"We needed a very solid engine, and with this being a movie-based game for next-generation consoles, we had time restrictions and a hard deadline," said Franco.

"We chose Unreal because the game had to ship on time. Unreal is a very solid and stable engine, and it gives us a group of tools that enable us to polish our game. It helps us to focus on the game's execution, reducing

development time and allowing the team to focus on creativity."

Franco said his team used many Unreal Engine 3 tools, including the robust level-editing system to structure the content with layers – more than 60 levels in each scenario. In addition, they employed the asynchronous load system to stream the world to gamers with no load time. In terms of actual gameplay, the team used UnrealScript, Matinee and Kismet to bring the action adventure game to life.

"Kismet gives us the opportunity to prototype gameplay quickly, so once mechanics are approved, we have more time to polish them," explained Franco.

"Unreal also helped us a lot developing *Planet 51* across platforms, particularly with the PS3 version, which has been less problematic that we thought it would be at the beginning."

The film was written by *Shrek* creator Joe Stillman, and the open world game adds a lot of new material to the mix through a variety of vehicle-based and pedestrian missions. "The game feels like you're playing in a real open world," said Franco. "You can control the characters from the movie and utilise their special abilities as you progress through the game."

As Pyro nears completion on its first Unreal Engine project, Franco said it's important to remember that Epic's technology is not just for shooters. "It has a lot of possibilities," said Franco, who points to his own action/platform/racing hybrid *Planet 51* as a great example of what can be done with Unreal Engine 3.

Everyone can explore *Planet 51* this winter on both the big screen and major game consoles.

Above: Jose Manuel Garcia Franco, Game director, Pyro Studios

UPCOMING EPIC ATTENDED EVENTS:

G-Star
Busan, Korea
November 26th - 29th, 2009

GCAP
Melbourne, Australia
December 6th - 8th, 2009

DICE Summit
Las Vegas, NV
February 17th - 19th, 2010

GDC 2010
San Francisco, CA
March 9th - 13th, 2010

Please email: mrein@epicgames.com for appointments.

To discuss anything raised in this column or general licensing opportunities for Epic Games' *Unreal* engine, contact: **mrein@epicgames.com**

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Mark Rein is vice president of Epic Games based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Since 1992 Mark has worked on Epic's licensing and publishing deals, business development, public relations, academic relations, marketing and business operations.
www.epicgames.com

Autodesk Games Insight

The latest scoop from Autodesk Media & Entertainment

A2M gets Wet with Autodesk

Montreal-based game developer Artificial Mind and Movement (A2M) is best known for developing family-friendly games and licensed titles like *Iron Man* and *Indiana Jones*. So when it was time for its first foray into mature gaming – for A2M to make its mark – the studio knew it would have to set a new standard in both game play mechanics and in look and feel.

Wet centers on Rubi, a feisty problem fixer trying to figure out who double-crossed her and why. It's a third-person shooter with a unique mix of acrobatics and swordplay. The game's dual-targeting system lets players control one of Rubi's weapons and auto-targets the other. Rubi can aim and shoot in different directions while doing complex acrobatic moves, and players are rewarded for making Rubi jump off the walls, shoot down ladders, stay in the air and be as acrobatic as possible.

Wet was written by Duppy Demetrius and Rubi was voiced by actress Eliza Dushku (*Dollhouse*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*). *Wet*'s gritty look and feel can be compared to films such as *Kill Bill*, *Desperado* and *Sin City*, with a clever use of photoreal 3D and stylised graphic novel-type visuals.

In key moments Rubi goes into 'rage mode', giving players an entirely different experience, where she becomes faster and stronger and the graphics transform to a minimalist color palette with enemies in contrasting colors.

With a staff of 500 working on as many as a dozen projects a year, A2M needed to standardise and streamline several key development processes with reliable, off-the-shelf tools. To do this, A2M used Autodesk Maya and Autodesk MotionBuilder to build the game characters and levels for *Wet*. Autodesk Kynapse middleware was used to implement the artificial intelligence that drives the game's non-playable characters.

Using Kynapse AI middleware helped A2M focus its development efforts on the creative look and feel of the game and high-level gameplay interactions, rather than on the time-consuming process of path-finding and location awareness.

"Our main philosophy with regards to development tools has always been that, if it's good and it already exists with the right price tag, why reinvent it? That's why we chose to work with Kynapse as our AI engine for *Wet*. In the game, the player confronts a large number of enemies. We needed a path finding and location awareness system to control decision-making for these characters in a coherent manner," explained Martin Walker, CTO of A2M.

"Kynapse has a fantastic hide-and-shoot algorithm that was used to conceal and disperse the enemies in a natural way throughout environments."

MotionBuilder was used to enhance motion-captured sequences, helping A2M experiment with character movement. "We used MotionBuilder extensively to clean up motion capture data for *Wet*," said Walker. "Also, when we did our mo-cap, we weren't sure which villain would take on which moves. With MotionBuilder, we were able to retarget motion data onto different characters even if the skeletal data wasn't necessarily a perfect match."

Wet is A2M's first mature AAA game title. "Titles like *Wet* are almost interactive films at this point, and the quality of the content is more important than ever. So if we can optimise our pipelines to enable more iterations at a faster pace, then we're ahead of the game. Tools like Maya, MotionBuilder and Kynapse help us get there," concluded Walker.

For more information on Autodesk games software and middleware please visit www.autodesk.com/games

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

"Titles like Wet are getting a lot closer to interactive films, and the quality of the content is more important than ever. So if we can optimise our pipelines to enable more iterations at a faster pace, then we're ahead of the game. Tools like Maya, MotionBuilder and Kynapse help us get there."

Martin Walker, chief technology officer, Artificial Mind and Movement

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UNITYFOCUS

Unity free-for-all

Yeah, you heard us right – Unity is now free. **Thomas Grové**, marketing manager for Unity Technologies, takes us through what else is new in Unity 2.6…

PRICE: Unity – Free
Unity Pro – $1500
WEB: www.unity3d.com

INSIDE UNITY 2.6

UNITY TECHNOLOGIES HAS JUST released Unity 2.6, a major update to our integrated game engine and development tool.

The biggest change? The base version of Unity is now free – now anyone can create interactive content with a best of breed tool without any financial barrier.

In addition to this stunning announcement, Unity 2.6 includes 134 new features and improvements.

This release adds support for external version control to Unity Pro – now you can use Subversion, Perforce, Bazaar or any other VCS out there. Full integration with Visual Studio has also been added – Unity can automatically sync a VS project to your source code so that all of your scripts are in your solution and IntelliSense is configured for you.

> ***"In addition to 134 new features and improvements, the base version of Unity is now free – now anyone can create content with a best of breed tool."***

Major streaming and loading features and optimisations that were implemented for games like Cartoon Network's *FusionFall* MMO and the recently released *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Online* have also been fully integrated into Unity 2.6. Chief among these features is support for prioritised background loading of new scenes and assets, while using minimal CPU and memory resources.

Other notable features include graphical improvements, such as screen space ambient occlusion, and a powerful built-in search feature for your project – simply type the name of the file in the Project window and see the live-updated results.

Check out the release notes at Unity3d.com to see the entire list of new features and improvements.

PRO TIP: pressing Ctrl-F (*or Command-F on a Mac*) when the Hierarchy window is selected will reveal a hierarchy search pane.

SPOTLIGHT: ANIMATION EDITOR

With Unity 2.6 you can animate any property using the state-of-the-art integrated animation editor. You can animate objects, materials, lights, script values, the whole enchilada. Refined tangent handling gives you full control. Want to tweak your game code to match animations? No problem – simply call a script from a keyframe from within your animations so that everything syncs perfectly.

SPOTLIGHT: PERFORMANCE PROFILER

You not only want to make great games, you want screaming performance. The new profiler makes it easy to see where your are spending resources, what scripts are running, and where the graphic bottlenecks lie. The profiler shows a frame-based overview, and a hierarchical CPU profiler, giving you the big picture and the ability to drill down to see the details.

Q&A WITH UNITY'S SAMANTHA KALMAN, SENIOR QA SPECIALIST

What new feature in Unity 2.6 are you most excited about?
I'm most excited about the new webplayer caching feature. This was already used in a pre-release form by *FusionFall* and enables hundreds of players to jump into the game quickly after only one initial, automatic caching procedure.

How do you think existing users will benefit from this release?
Companies that purchase this feature will be able to store large amounts of data on the end-user's machine. So if I have a game that uses two gigabytes of model, texture, and audio data, I can stream that in intelligently on the player's first play and avoid any wait times for players to play my games ever again. This combined with the existing power of the Unity engine allows for games that are grand in scope, playability, and content all within a web browser. This has just never been done before.

Are there any features or improvements introduced in Unity 2.6 that you feel are likely to win over new users?
I'm hoping that the new Animation View, which is a powerful curve editor, will make it easy for those who are not artists or don't have access to a 3D package that they like, to be able to create interesting animations for characters or

anything else. Then they can tweak it to ship it in the final product, or use it as a prototype until an artist can come onboard. Either way it just adds to 'what you can do inside Unity' and brings us one step closer to being the only game development tool that anybody needs.

There are a lot of new features in Unity 2.6 — why not save some of these features for version 3.0?
We just really love our customers and we have this history of giving away much more than we 'should'. Mac OSX users have received this benefit since Unity 1.1 and now Windows users can experience that Unity spirit of 'bang for your buck' with plenty of updates and new features in each major version.

What are some of the workflow improvements that you think makes life easier or people more productive?
As well as support for the latest version of Autodesk's FBX plugin, we have a 2.0 version of the asset server product, and we've completely replaced the audio engine so your existing sounds will sound nicer than ever. And if this still isn't enough, we have improved messaging for common workflow scenarios to help prevent the user from making mistakes before they make them.

5 november 2009
develop
in Liverpool

Movin' on Up

As you probably know by now, the Develop Conference is heading North to Liverpool. This new one-day event brings with it all the credentials of its older sister in Brighton.

You can look forward to:

- An inspiring line-up of speakers from both sides of the development community and from outside industries such as film and music
- A broad range of sessions covering all disciplines of game development, including Production, Coding, Games Design, Art and Audio
- Insight into the cutting edge of game development via our Evolve track which focuses on developing for new platforms, new markets and new technologies
- A sociable, relaxed environment in which to mix with fellow developers, share ideas and learn something new

Party Time!

Your Develop pass gets you into the "after show party" overlooking Albert Dock with an opportunity to network with speakers and delegates from both Develop and Software City - an event running alongside whose speakers include "dragon" **Richard Farleigh** and "online dragon" **Julie Meyer**

Sessions include:

Evolve

Turning Browsers into Gamers for Fun and Profit
Dylan Collins, Jolt Online Gaming

Five App Stores Under the Microscope: iPhone, Blackberry, PSN, Android, WiiWare
Stuart Dredge, Mobile Entertainment

Digital Distribution: From Blue Sky to the Bottom Line
Chair: Nicholas Lovell, GAMESbrief
Panellists: Mark Morris, Introversion Software; Tero Virtala, RedLynx

What the Music Industry Can Tell Us about Digital Distribution
Simon Watt, Universal Music Group

Art & Design

Why is Game Difficulty So Difficult?
Jason Avent, Disney Black Rock Studio

Resurrecting the Alien Breed franchise
John Dennis, Team 17

Role of the Production House in Game Development and Marketing
Tony Prosser, RealtimeUK

Coding & Production

PlayStation®: Cutting Edge Techniques
Neil Brown, SCEE

6 Ways to Get More Bang for Your Buck
Kevin Hassall, Beriah

How to Get More From your Music and Audio Team
Chair: John Broomhall, Independent Audio Director
Panellists: Dan Bardino, SCEE; Adele Cutting, EA; Nick Wiswell, Bizarre Creations

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CryENGINE 3 released
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SERVICES:
Onteca moves into game dev
p77

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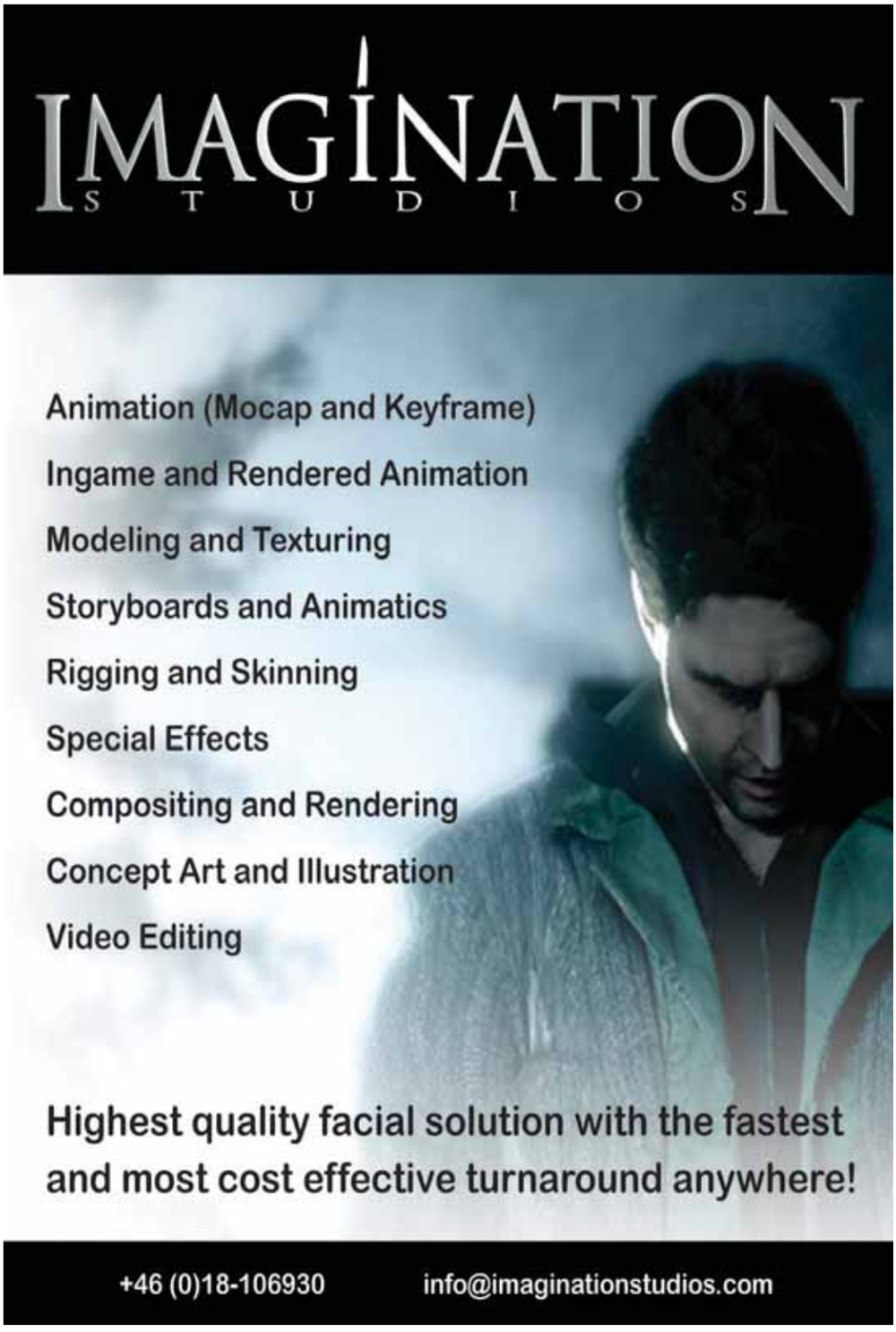


Studio News

This month: Blitz 1UP, nDreams, Universally Speaking

Blitz's 1UP programme has been bolstered by three new signings, four green-lit projects and, as a result, a new staff member.

The programme, which ties up Blitz's production know-how, publisher connections and technology with independent and small studios, has had three titles signed and a further four green-lit in recent months.

"The response to the programme has been fantastic," said Chris Swan, business development director for Blitz Arcade and 1UP.

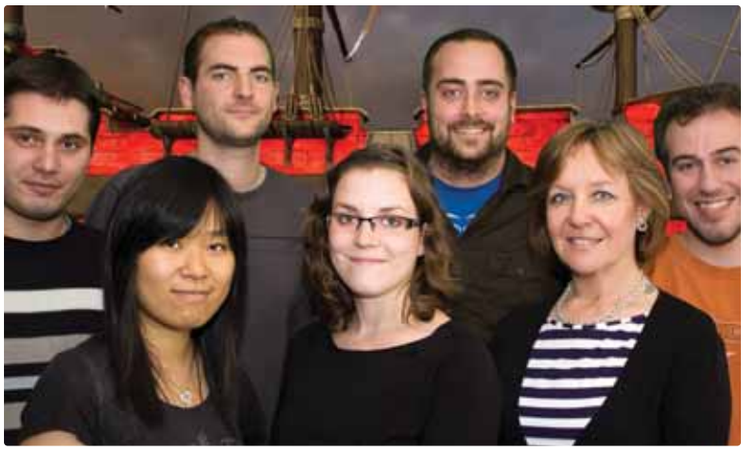
"Since we launched the label last November take-up has steadily increased, and we're hugely excited with the new games and teams that we have lined up."

To cope with the new workload, Blitz has hired a new producer for the label, Neil Holmes.

"I'm delighted to be working alongside Chris on the Blitz 1UP initiative," says Holmes, an industry veteran of 19 years.

"With the increase in resources and new processes that we're putting in place we're now able to fully scale up the programme to the next level."

www.blitzgamesstudios.com



British development studio **nDreams** has recently expanded its team with the addition of seven new members in various departments.

Three of these hires join the firm's programming team, with Angelo Orlando Cafazzo taking up the role of senior programmer and Steven Cannavan and Pete Boners hired as programmers.

In the art department, Andrew Madden and Katie-Louise Talbot joins as artists. Elsewhere, Jingwan Sun has been appointed as web engineer and Lynne Oliver joins as the studio's new finance manager.

www.ndreams.co.uk

QA and localisation company **Universally Speaking** has named Dan Dring as its new business development assistant.

Dring, who recently graduated in business studies from the University of Northampton, has already gained experience working for Universally Speaking's testing department during his studies.

"I am delighted to welcome Daniel to the company following his studies, and for him to assume this exciting role," stated Universally Speaking's Vickie Peggs. "I expect Daniel to start making a positive contribution to our growth plans."

Daniel's new responsibilities include identifying new sales opportunities, building and maintaining relationships with new and existing clients and assisting with the general growth strategy of the business.

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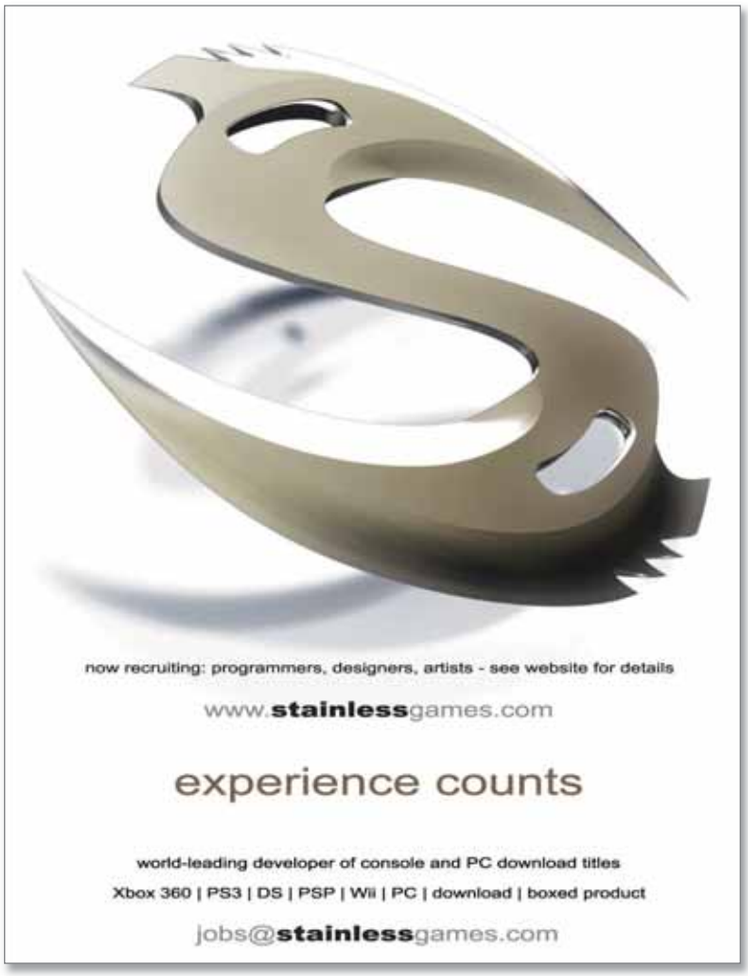
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Tools News

CryENGINE 3 released to developers

Crytek's most powerful and versatile iteration of its engine has been released to developers.

CryENGINE 3 is available for a wide spectrum of game projects on PC, Xbox 360 and PS3. The engine's legacy is in the FPS genre – best showcased in the past with the acclaimed 2007 title *Crysis* – but the Frankfurt-headquartered company has expanded CryENGINE 3's remit to MMO development as well.

Many developers will be most interested in seeing the new CryENGINE 3 Sandbox level editor, an unfussy professional level-editing tool where the preview pane displays exactly what is seen in a play-through.

The engine also comes with Live Create, a tool that allows developers to edit games on all available platforms through a single development PC.

Crytek CEO Cevat Yerli hailed the engine as 'the best development solution available today and tomorrow.'

Said Yerli: "With its scalable graphics and computation it is next-gen ready, and with new features like CryENGINE 3 Live Create it's the best choice for game developers and companies developing serious games applications alike.

"It is the only game engine solution that enables real-time development and can ensure teams are able to maximise their own creativity, save budget and create greater gaming experiences."

www.crytek.com

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Tool Spotlight

PRO TOOLS 8

digidesign

Area of Expertise: Audio

Pitched as the most advanced option for audio production and creation, Pro Tools 8 from Avid's Digidesign features a completely revised interface, a range of original MIDI and scoring features, and numerous new instruments and plug-ins.

As well as delivering a tool that promises to be easier to use and more efficient, Pro Tools 8 includes a well-stocked studio library, which consists of over 70 virtual instruments, effects and utility plug-ins.

The tech also provides for deeper control hardware integration which, along with an all-new MIDI editor and vastly improved track compositioning workflows, means that perfecting a performance from multiple takes is easier and less time-consuming than ever before.

Furthermore, Pro Tools LE and Pro Tools M-Powered users can now take advantage of up to three-times as many audio tracks, mixing up to 48 simultaneous stereo or mono tracks, allowing for more intricate, elaborate results.

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Services News

Training services firm moving to game development

Tech company and training service provider Onteca has revealed that it is to move into indie development.

Founded in 2001, the Liverpool-based company has previously worked across a number of interactive media disciplines, and has a wealth of experience developing and providing training technology. Previous trainees working under Onteca now work for major computer game developers including Sony, Codemasters and Rare, and the studio has forged a bond with the MA Digital Games at Liverpool John Moores University where its staff teach modules and co-produce on the Directed Digital Workshop element of the degree.

Now Onteca's 20-strong team are moving into games development, and plan to create titles for Flash, Wii, PSP and iPhone. Onteca's first title, *Monsteca Corral* is due to arrive on Nintendo's WiiWare store early in 2010.

"I'm proud to say that Onteca is a proven deliverer of quality, Innovative products. We've been on the front line of development, cutting our teeth on some of the most difficult emerging

technologies in the field," said Onteca's managing director, Jon Wetherall.

"We're keen to create partnerships with organisations needing to deploy downloadable games on a range of platforms."

www.onteca.com

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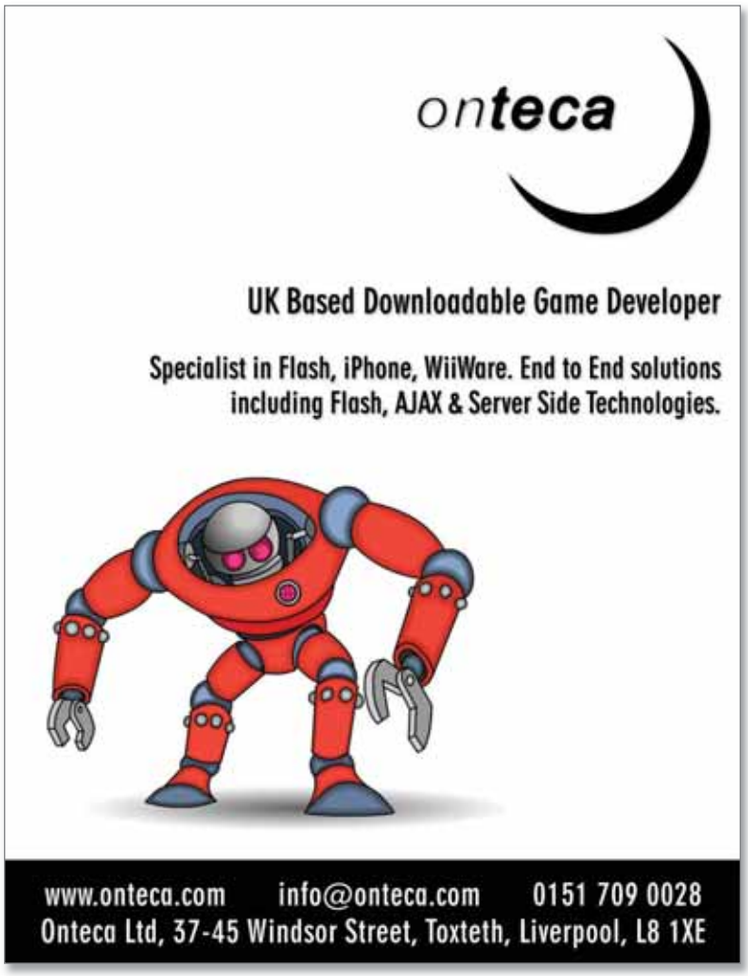
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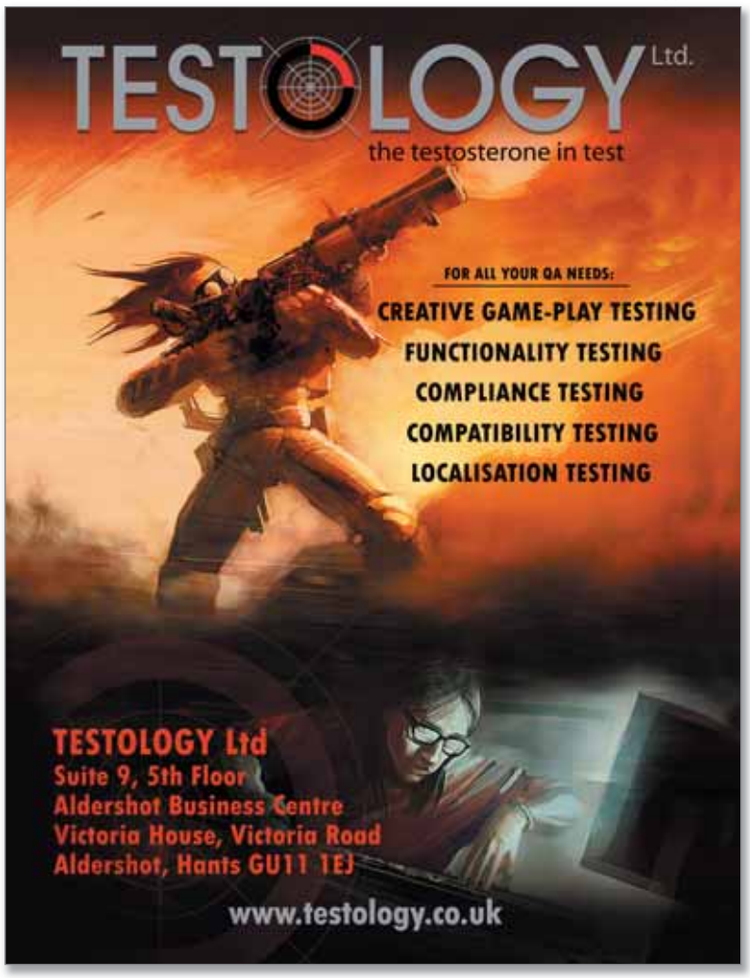

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Training News

Denki's Brian Baglow supports Edinburgh's first dedicated games lab

Two industry veterans are supporting what purports to be Edinburgh's first dedicated video games lab, which opened it's doors in early October at Edinburgh Napier University's School of Computing.

Backed by Brian Baglow, who worked at Scotland's DMA Design on the original *Grand Theft Auto* and who now works at Denki, and Kenny Mitchell, who recently contributed to the *Harry Potter* games and Steven Spielberg's BAFTA award-winning game *Boom Blox*, the games lab features four networked Xbox 360s and PCs, a 50-inch plasma screen and large projected screen, as well as robotics development capabilities. Both Baglow and Mitchell are both former Edinburgh Napier students.

The games lab has been conceived and created primarily as a resource for students taking Napier's new BSc in Interactive Entertainment, which has been designed to nurture the next generation of games programmers.

"Designing digital entertainment products aimed at PCs, games consoles and mobile computing devices has become a lucrative industry and created a demand for skilled programmers and games designers," said Sally Smith, head of the School of Computing at Edinburgh Napier.

"As a computing school, we have a strong track record of producing students, such as Brian and Kenny, who have gone on to make their mark in the industry. We want to give our current students every chance to follow in their footsteps and the new games lab is a fantastic resource to help them make that step from classroom to industry."

Baglow added: "There is a real pioneering spirit amongst Scotland's games companies, who have been quietly leading the way in a range of areas. The economic significance of the activity going on up here is now being more widely recognised and makes it more important than ever that strong links continue to be fostered between the games industry and academic institutions like Edinburgh Napier."

www.napier.ac.uk

Chinese uni bases new course on Gamebryo tech

Emergent's Gamebryo engine will be implemented at a Chinese university leading the way in the nation's game development courses.

Starting this autumn, students attending Interactive Believe at Chongqing University can be enrolled in an engineer certification training program that perfects their craft using the Gamebryo LightSpeed engine.

Successful students will be awarded a Certified Emergent User certificate.

Interactive Believe's Kevin Yang said of the deal: "Gamebryo is one of the most popular game engines used in China today, and with the burgeoning game development business here, it is imperative that we educate enough students to fill the industry's demand."

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"The course is rigorous and demanding, but in the end worth the hard work. I got two job offers from leading companies in the games industry within a month of completing my course. The best part is that I didn't really have to struggle to get them." Hussain Sheikh 2006 MSc
For more quotes from ex-students, examples of student work and syllabus information please visit www.mscgames.com.
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Fallout 3

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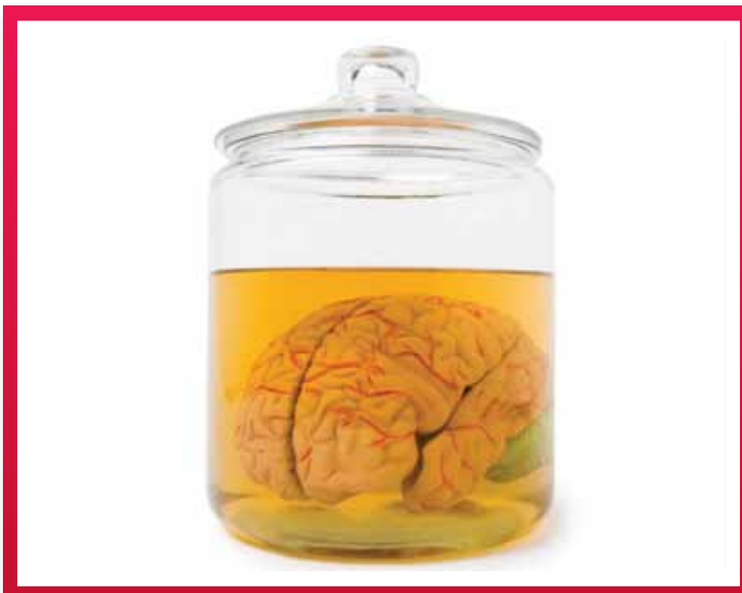

DEC 2009/JAN 2010

London Focus

We take a look at the burgeoning development scene within the M25, its achievements over the year and what's to come.

Artificial Intelligence

The latest movements in the AI field, plus the growing middleware battleground

develop

ISSUE OUT (PRINT & ONLINE):
December 17th, 2009

DEADLINE:
Editorial: December 3rd, 2009
Advertising: November 26th, 2009

FEBRUARY 2010

Recruitment

It's the time of year where everyone's thinking of moving on, so we take a look at how the games industry job market is coping in the recession. Our comprehensive guide to the job market will include:

- Our regular salary and jobs survey
- An update on quality of life issues
- Advice for those looking to get into or move within the industry

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ISSUE OUT (PRINT & ONLINE):
January 28th, 2010

DEADLINE:
Editorial: January 14th, 2010
Advertising: January 11th, 2010

develop FORWARD PLANNER

MARCH 2010	APRIL 2010	MAY 2010	JUNE 2010	JULY 2010
Special Focus: QA & Localisation	**Special Focus: Facial animation**	**DEVELOP 100**	**Special Focus:** Middleware	**DEVELOP IN BRIGHTON**
Event: GDC 2010		**Special Focus:** Legal		
Regional Focus: San Francisco	**Regional Focus:** Oxford Studios	**Region Focus:** Brighton		
Copy Deadline: February 15th	**Copy Deadline:** March 15th	**Copy Deadline:** April 14th	**Copy Deadline:** May 14th	**Copy Deadline:** June 14th

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To discuss **ADVERTISING** contact Katie.Rawlings@intentmedia.co.uk, or call her on 01992 535647

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* bottle of champaigne for each member of the team - 1st, 2nd and 3rd place teams

Last quiz winners: **Waterfront Games**

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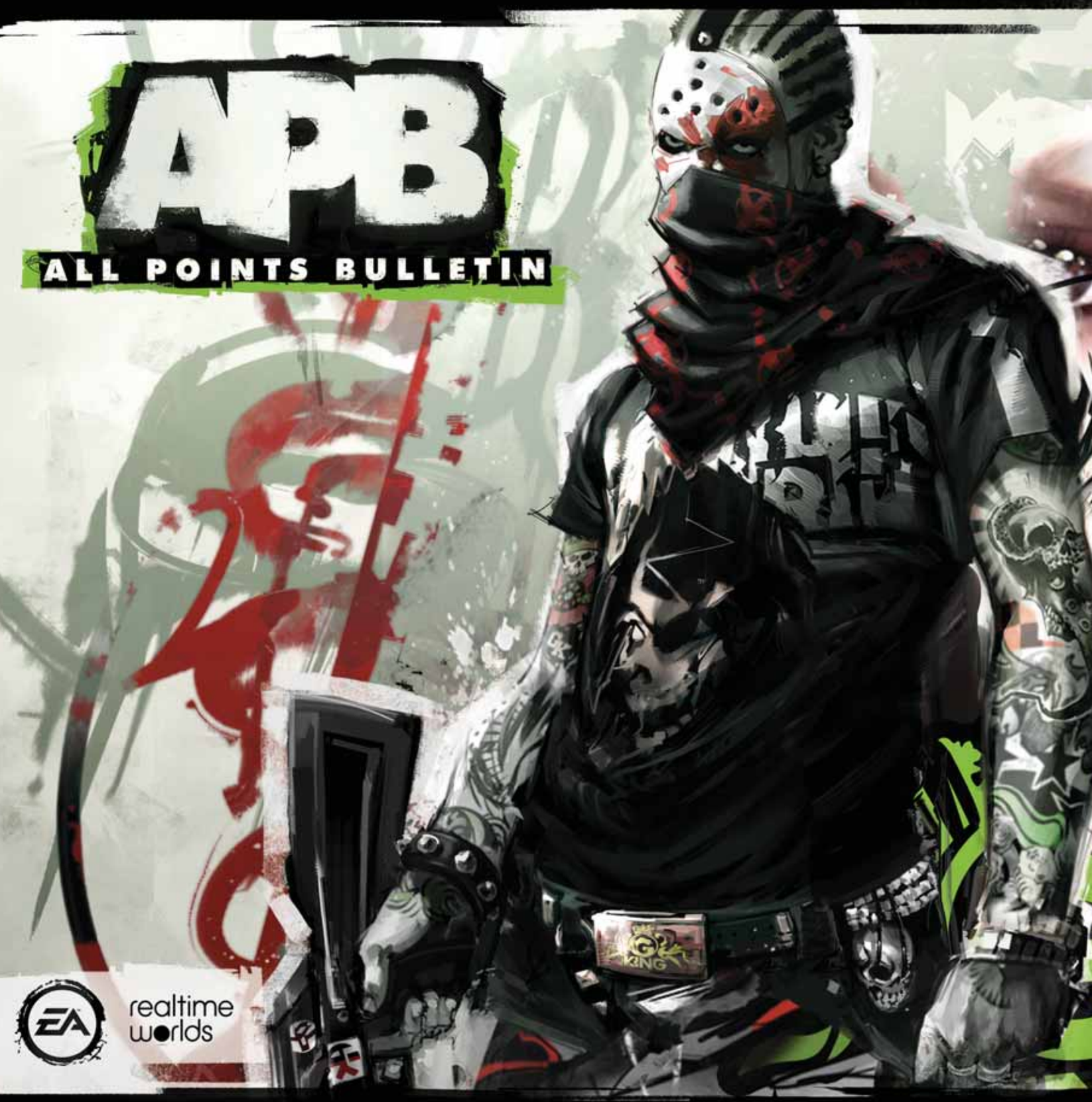

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